Alice Tale

Reborn in another world, as a pretty girl

When I woke up, there was nothing familiar surrounding me.

I was confused, but I had one idea.

I am a very imaginative person.

"...eh? Another world? Seriously?"

Yep, I am very imaginative, but hearing my voice say it, it's really nothing but foolish.

Wait, waitwaitwait, there was an even more important truth in my voice.

Exactly, my voice.

You want to know what's wrong with my voice?

My name is Arisugawa Akito

Eighteen years old.

I'm a student who moved to Tokyo just this spring to attend university.

To calm my nerves a bit, let me reminisce.

About what happened yesterday...

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Until I finished high school, while living out in the boonies, I entered a club, applied myself and lived an overall vigorous student life.

I'd played soccer since I was tiny and I spent a large part of my youth on it, too, but in the last tournament of my third year in highschool, we lost and I burnt out.

Afterwards, I buried it under studying, fulfilled the condition for leaving home by qualifying for a rather good university and began living alone.

Well, so far, everything was good.

But by that time, I was so burnt out you wouldn't believe for an eighteen-year-old. I couldn't get myself motivated to do a~nything anymore.

I only went to university for the opening ceremony.

Then I unquestionably turned into one of the enrolled students on the verge of becoming NEETs[1].

But while I had no motivation, I certainly had more time that I could spend on my hands.

At that point, I encountered online games.

Creating new characters that would become extensions of myself, acting out a new self in virtual worlds was quite exhilarating.

In no time at all I was caught and played game after game, all month long, even cutting down on sleeping time.

University?

I never went.

Ah, sorry, the opening ceremony. I did go there.

Which is not to say that I have issues communicating with people.

It's just a bother, you see!

D-don't get the wrong idea, alright!

Well, not like any of that matters.

Anyway, I particularly liked fantasy-themed MMORPGs.

Fantasy.

That's good.

Since long ago I've liked reading books when I was tired, I loved submerging myself in my fantasies.

On nights with movies from Ghibli or so I could fantasize so much, I was all fluffy inside from happiness.

There may not be any Aetherium[2], but I did float as I pleased inside my head, you know?

Right, I loved running through fantastic worlds.

As a new me, that is.

And like that, I wandered through many worlds as many characters and lived a fulfilled university life, but there I found one experiment I wanted to try.

——I want to try playing a girl.

It's alluring, right?

And, knowing how rude it is, don't you sometimes think you're better than a girl at acting like one? Meaning an ideal one, in the mind of a man like me.

Well, I had such a slight obsession with changing myself.

Creating personas?

So I decided.

I was going to become a girl cuter than anyone.

Then I searched for an appropriate online game and finally arrived at "New Life in Another World", a rather relaxed-seeming representative of its kind.

The name was unassuming, not going for an extreme impact or anything.

That's what I liked about it.

In that game, I was going to make my debut as a girl character.

I spent quite a bit of time on character creation.

There were all kinds of races, but to begin with I decided on a half between human and elf.

Age fifteen.

I wavered for a while over the hair color.

Two hours, maybe?

You can't go wrong with blond.

However, red is cool.

But pink is cute.

Blues are also cool and give good vibes.

Still, exactly because it's a fantasy world, going with black after all has a point, too.

I wavered.

I wavered and wavered and finally went with the other safe option, platinum blond.

In short, I picked silver hair.

Long, straight silver hair.

It was quite cool and I liked it.

The eyes were a bit slanted and had that strong-willed look.

I set their color to amber.

Just 160cm for height, and a slender, model-like figure.

Boobs are filled with dream, but for this character it felt excessive so I gave them a moderate size. Yep, my pickiness led to a good result..

With that I finished setting the appearance..

Time spent: ridiculous.

But you can say I managed to create the most beautiful girl I could.

Next came setting the character's attributes.

There was a large number of classes and I wavered again.

Just which one was appropriate for this beautiful girl?

Grabbing a sword and standing on the frontline was fascinating, but I decided to leave it for another time and wanted to pick a magic class after all.

Firepower or healing, that was the question.

Due to the strong-willed expression, it had to be firepower, right?

So it had to be a prodigiously offensive class.

I picked Mage and went on to spending the points.

No matter how I set them, I'd probably be able to get quite strong through leveling, but apparently the first points decided the direction the character would take.

I again wavered.

There were 5 attributes, and I could spend a total of 10 points to bring their values up to 5.

Strength, Endurance, Protection, Agility, Mind

I was to allocate the points in these five entries.

If I spent them equally, all would get to 2.

In short, it should be alright to think of 2 as the average.

3 was a bit superior.

4 was quite excellent

5 was genius-level.

Hmm.

I don't like being a jack of all trades.

So min-maxing it was!

Strength 0, Endurance 1, Protection 0, Agility 4, Mind 5.

That completely used the 10 points I had.

MUAHAHAHAHA.

Truly the defensive power of paper.

I was going to live on Agility and Mind - which was probably magic attack power – alone.

And, of course, beauty.

The next step was setting special abilities.

There I could get special abilities by allocating points, but I only had 3 this time.

There were a ton of options, but I decided on "Latent Potential", "Double Cast" and "Cast Time Reduction".

I'd already decided on min-maxing after all.

Nobody would be able to defend against my attacks!

...but if I didn't find someone to be my shield, and soon, wouldn't I die from one tackle from a slime?

Oh, well.

I could always use my Agility to dodge.

Finally, I finished all the trials and tribulations of creating this character.

I clicked "Next" and got a popup titled "Welcome to another world!"

"Do you believe in other worlds?"

YES NO

Hmm, that's a Yes, yes.

Because I'm a pure boy dreaming of other worlds.

Without wavering, I clicked YES.

"Then, have a nice life."

That was the last message.

I think.

I think, because at that point my consciousness stopped.

*

Reminiscence Over.

"..."

Hmm.

I'm getting a very, very bad vibe here.

It's not a cheap trick like dreaming or hypnosis, definitely not.

This meadow I'm sitting on? The softness and smell are certainly natural.

In the first place, where is my one room apartment, my home and my castle?

I'm not half-asleep.

My vision is clear.

Nothing is blurry.

No problem.

Alright, I finally made my resolve to clear the issue that had given me my first doubts.

I readied myself and said something once more.

"Ahh. Test, test?"

... I heard an unbelievable lovely voice.

Coming from my throat.

I combed my hair that felt a bit odd.

Long. It was also glossy and smooth and silver.

…

I touched my chest.

They were moderate, but definitely filled with dream!

... I touched them again.

I-I'm not doing anything dirty, alright!?

This is important!

This is important!!

It's really important, so I repeated it.

There was an absence between my legs.

"...eh?"

EH?

Can you understand my despair right now?

Only barely did I manage to not fall unconscious again.

But I pulled myself together.

I got up.

My old height was 175cm.

"What's with this line of sight, so low..."

This is so weird.

...ahhh, yes, yes, I'm one-sixty, right. I know that.

I was just a bit negligent.

Furthermore, I also know something else.

No, I have no idea how to deal with it yet, but let's admit it:

"I became a woman..."

I only thought I'd play a girl, but it looks like I became one in another world.

Encounter

I am at a loss and there's nothing I can do about it.

No, actually I've been at a loss for a while now, but reality doesn't accommodate you just like that.

Reality meaning the reality of another world, that is.

After noticing I could see my own Status, for a start I did just that:

Name: Alice
Race: Halfelf
Age: 15
Gender: Female
Class: Apprentice Mage
Level: 1
Skill: None
Magic: None

It's true that I set the age to fifteen, but to think I'd really grow three years younger...

Well, I've changed gender, so that may be the least of my worries.

And the name, Alice, is just like I set it.

Alice, because it's so close to my last name Arisugawa.

The clear, nearby lake reflected my appearance.

A pretty girl just like I had made her.

I tried smiling a bit.

Crap, she's too cute.

I might fall for her.

Although it's me.

Didn't I make a slight mistake with the settings?

Are other worlds no fun after all unless you're a man?

...oh, well.

A more pressing issue is the entry on magic.

Magic: None

That's bad.

As a Level 1 Apprentice Mage, I should learn magic after leveling up a bit, but at least at the moment I had none.

Because everything's been true to my settings so far, chances are the Attributes will be the same, too.

In other words, hand-to-hand combat is impossible for this character.

And yet I can't use magic.

This is seriously bad.

My life's not gonna be in serious danger the moment I meet a monster around here, is it?

The moment I realized that, I got scared of being on that meadow.

Am I going to be fine around here, monster-wise?

In my early days, it's not going to be that unreasonable, right?

But because I couldn't see anyone around, I had no choice but to move on my own.

By the way, to see if I couldn't log out or something, I minutely checked my Status, loitered around a bit and spent some more time at a loss, like before.

... all for naught.

I'd seen that coming.

So, first I had to search for a town or so to survive.

Before making my move, I checked my equipment.

Weapon: None

Armor: Cloth Clothes

Accessory: None

Hey, aren't I really gonna die when a monster comes?

To warn myself, to not do anything reckless, I remembered my own Attributes.

Strength 0, Endurance 1, Protection 0, Agility 4, Mind 5

Like this, right?

No weapons, but Strength 0.

Only Cloth Clothes, but Endurance 1 and Protection 0.

Mind 5, but no magic to rely on.

Grml...

Agility.

I have to overcome this with Agility.

If I encounter a monster, I'm going to run away!

That decision in mind, I set out.

While fearfully walking around, something like a distant town came into view.

Looks like I'm on top of a hill right now, so I can easily see all around.

I call it a town, but it isn't that large.

Only a bit more developed than a village, I'd say.

However, even if I enter the town, I have neither money nor a place to stay. What's going to happen to me?

Furthermore.

Furthermore, you see?

Right now, I am the most perfectly beautiful girl I could imagine.

I checked it earlier, and I'm so lovely I could fall for myself.

Sleeping outdoors will be bad.

If I don't secure a place to sleep securely, it'll be bad.

This place definitely has worse public order than modern Japan, right?

I like the thought of getting attacked by a man even less than getting attacked by a monster.

That would be hell.

First, I have to find a way to defend myself.

In all kinds of meanings.

——but just before reaching the town, I finally encountered a monster!

Level 1 Petite Panther

Enemy Status, says the information popping up in my head.

But more importantly...

EHHH WHAT'S THIS SO CUTE!!

It's a puppy.

It's a perfect, mischievous puppy.

It's grown a little horn, but it's still a cute horn.

The fangs a bit sharp, but they're still cute fangs.

I'm a complete dog person, by the way.

I think had my apartment allowed pets, I totally would've kept a dog...

"Eh, woah!"

The cute puppy came charging at me with its horn.

I dodged it at the last second.

Hey, wait, puppy!

That was dangerous

What are you going to do if you stab me with that!

That's not funny!

"...sorry, puppy! I mustn't die in this place, either!"

I readied myself and decided to fight.

Before the puppy recovered its stance from the charge, I punched it.

As expected of my Agility.

With casual ease I hit the puppy.

Prod.

"…"

"…"

The puppy's big, round eyes met mine.

I almost got bitten for that.

"CRAA...!" I quickly dodged.

...ap, I definitely can't win this.

This is too powerless, right?

When my limit is prodding a puppy.

Arm strength that loses against a puppy? Come on!

What do I do? What do I do!

While I my thoughts were impatiently treading in circles, the puppy charged again.

Ah————crap.

I can't dodge that one.

One hit?

Am I going to die in one hit?

Protection 0 means paper, right?

I keep watching the events in slow motion, blinking not even once.

"Hng!"

Suddenly, a well-built uncle stepped between the puppy and me.

Why uncle, you ask?

Because I saw his dandy profile that made it clear he's that old!

Uncle stopped and repelled the puppy's charge with his shield and impaled it with his sword.

... doesn't make for a nice picture, does it.

With that, the puppy stopped moving and disappeared like fog.

I see, monsters disappear upon defeat.

That's way better than leaving behind corpses.

A drop item appeared.

Petite Panther's Fur

I wonder, can I just sell these and make my living that way?

Uncle specially picked it up and threw it to me.

"That was dangerous, Missy. A little Missy like you shouldn't loiter around outside town like that?"

Missy?

Ahh, he means me.

This dandy old man threw me a look over his shoulder and loosened his face into a broad grin.

"Y-yes. Thank you very much."

Alright, perfect yourself!

I originally intended to do so anyway, but now I'll show you what a great girl I can be!

I am a bit excited though.

Although there's nothing that could expose me. I'm not gonna be exposed, right?

"But... this is a surprise. Missy, are you an elf?"

"Eh...?"

Uncle made a surprised face after looking at me again.

Eh?

How did he notice I'm an elf?

I'm actually a halfelf though.

"No, I'm a halfelf."

"Hee..., I see I see. You're the cutest girl I've ever seen, so I thought you might be an elf, but I see."

Are elven looks that superior?

"I-is that so. Uhm, thank you very much. For saving me just now."

I'd been on the verge of death. No kidding.

"I told you, don't sweat it. We have to help each other in trouble, right? From the looks of it you're alone; don't you have a companion?"

Uncle answered me with a smile and worriedly looked around since I was alone.

I hadn't had a bad feeling about him in since the beginning, but now he seemed like a genuinely good guy.

Hmm, what should I do.

Mixing in a bit of the truth, I told him my situation.

"Actually, I left home. Uhm, I cannot ever go back, and without anywhere to go, either, I was wondering what to do... probably."

It's true.

I only omitted some details.

And whether I can ever go back or not needs some verification in the future.

Uncle listened to my story quietly.

"Missy, you said you're a halfelf, right... Elven villages are harsh in that respect. Must have been tough on you."

Uncle was moved to tears a bit.

And hey, elves are horrible, aren't they?!

Really elitist, huh.

"Ahh, nono, how should I put this."

But arbitrarily making the elves the bad guys didn't sit well with me either.

"It's fine, it's finy, Missy. Everyone's got a thing or two they don't want to remember!"

Yepyep, Uncle nodded.

What should I do, this person is a bottomless fountain of goodness.

"Still, I see. But it's no good if a missy like you has nowhere to go. Humans aren't all bad guys, either, but it must be tough to live on your own for a girl as ignorant of the world as you are, Missy."

Ignorant of the world, huh.

Is that how I look to you?

Well, I can't fight and I was alone outside of town.

And at least in this world it's true that I don't know left from right.

I got anxious after all.

Seeing my uneasy expression, Uncle gave me one, big nod.

"I'm Nicholl, an adventurer living in this town. I live with my wife and daughter, but if you like, why don't you stay with us, Missy? This must be some kind of fate. I can't just let you to the dogs like this."

"Eh!?"

Is this what they call a godsend?

Ignorant of the world as Uncle had called me and exhausted to boot, I nodded without hesitation.

It's too much trust in someone I just met, but he did save my life.

And more than anything, I really have no way to survive in this world, so I have to rely on someone.

For now.

"Uhm, it may cause you trouble, but please help me."

"Hahaha, that's no trouble. With someone like you at home, Missy, it'll be cheerful, and my daughter'll be happy for someone her age."

Uncle told me with a wry smile that she'd always been noisy about wanting a little sister.

"I... My name is Alice. Nicholl-san, really, thank you!!!"

When I smiled in relief from the bottom of my heart, Uncle got a bit agitated and flustered.

"O-Ouu! Let's go, Mis... Alice-chan!"

Like that, I took my first step living in another world.

Rinnal

The town nearby is apparently called Rinnal.

It's a town flourishing due to the local specialty, a fruit called Rinnal, and has been named thus.

But what's a Rinnal?

And what language am I talking in in the first place?

By the way, after you introduce yourself and consent, you can apparently see each other's Status.

Not everything though.

Uncle's Status is as follows:

Name: Nicholl
Race: Human
Age: 41
Gender: Male
Class: Warrior
Level: 38

Uncle, isn't level 38 really strong?

I can't see information like Skills or Magic.

It's probably valuable information so you don't show it for just a self-introduction.

Let's remember that.

"Unc————Nicholl-san, you're strong, aren't you? Level 38 is amazing."

On the other hand, after seeing my Status, Uncle made a meek face again.

"Throwing a girl like this out is messed up."

What part of my Status is he talking about when he says "a girl like this"?

My age? My level?

After that, we entered while I noncommittally let Uncle's consolation wash past me.

There were some guard-looking people at the gate, but apparently everyone can enter.

They didn't say anything in particular to me.

They did stare though.

Hey, don't ogle a girl too much.

It's unpleasant.

All the way to Uncle's house, I was exposed to the stares.

The beauty I have poured all my effort into gathers too much attention.

This is tough.

"Honey, I'm home!"

Uncle opened the door and entered, and I followed him in.

"Hello."

"———!"

The moment I entered the house, my eyes met with the wife-ish person sitting at the living room table.

She looked at me, looked at Uncle, and looked at me again.

——Then her face turned demonic.

"AHHH!"

I reflexively screamed.

"...dear, just what's the meaning of this? You're not going to tell me you secretly saved up money and bought a slave, are you!!"

Slave?

You can buy slaves here? Hee, this really is another world.

"I-I didn't! Calm down! I ran into this girl when she was in trouble outside town and protected her!!"

Level 38 Uncle was shedding cold sweat as he explained.

Hmmmm.

Just now, level 38 seemed really weak.

I don't really have anything against him.

But now I do want to test if my attacks are weak or not.

"Ey!"

Prod, I hit Uncle in the gut.

For his age, I think he has tight abs.

By the way, as prod-dy as the hit was, I unmistakably hit him with my full power.

I looked up at Uncle, but it didn't look like the attack had done anything.

So it's no good after all.

Or is it?

Suddenly Uncle paled.

It worked?

But when I looked around, I found a demon.

Ahh, so that's how it is?

"Hee? So why did this girl resist you with all she has just now?"

Unable to reply anything to the demon's question, Uncle could only shiver like a newborn, little deer.

"Uhm, so is he strong or weak now..."

No, it's not like I had anything against him.

Really.

After that, various heroic tales were shared, and when the misunderstanding was finally solved, Aunty was worried for me from the bottom of her heart.

She's a good person.

It seems she's called Adele.

I asked her to show me her Status.

Name: Adele
Race: Human
Age: 40
Gender: Female
Class: Tailor
Level: 21

Tailor means she makes clothes, right?

Which reminds me, when I came in, Aunty was been sewing at the table.

"Alice-chan, if you have any troubles, don't hesitate and tell us, ok? Feel free to think of this house as your home from now on."

"Ehm... I'm somewhat really sorry. I want to bother you as little as possible."

What's with the people in this world?

Are you saying that I was too sulky back in reality?

Or is this couple just special?

No, this couple must be special, right?

Isn't my greatest fortune bar none since coming to this world that I met this couple?

"Such a reserved girl, aren't you."

Modesty is a virtue, you know?

Uncle is knocked out on the sofa so I'm chatting with Aunty now.

"Uhm, I want to become an adventurer."

To earn money.

"Hmm... certainly, you are a Mage, although still an apprentice, Alice-chan. That should become your greatest strength when it comes to being an adventurer."

Mmmmm, Aunty was murmuring.

"Uhm, is there a problem?"

"Well, becoming an adventurer is open to anyone. For registration at the guild, just pay 1000 Rook and you're good."

Hee, so the currency in this world is called Rook.

"But I'm worried if a girl like you wants to do such a dangerous job, Alice-chan."

Well, I think there all kinds of good professions, like Aunty here being a Tailor.

——Hooowever!

I'm finally in another world. How could I not adventure!?

Would that be allowed?

No, it wouldn't!

Well, I can't win against a puppy, though.

But the current situation is ultimately just that, current.

"...I, for a long time I've lived shut in a small place. I've longed for the outside world. I wanted to see so much, experience so much. Adventuring is my dream!"

It's not a lie, technically.

Small place = my one room apartment.

And I did long for my daydreams.

Alright, I didn't lie at all!

"Alice-chan..."

A tear rolled down Aunty's cheek.

Too easy.

"I understand. If you're that determined, I'm not going to stop you! But at least in the beginning, form a party with our daughter and keep to nearby places. That girl may be a bit mischievous, but her skills are excellent."

Hmmm?

Come to think of it, Uncle mentioned he has a daughter.

Aunty has started putting on a bit weight due to her age, but you can still see how pretty she was, and Uncle is eye candy for being in his middle ages.

Their daughter might be something to look forward to.

...nope, even if I look forward to it, nothing's going to happen, alright!!

Just who had to go and attempt playing a girl!

"Thank you very much. That would help me a lot."

"Sure, sure. Okay, I'm going to prepare an early dinner today, so eat something and take a good rest. My daughter will stay out late anyway."

She offered, so I took her up on it.

Dinner consisted of a pie made with the local specialty, rinnals.

I say rinnals, but they're apples! Apples!

So why are they called rinnals!?

By the way, it may be a fantasy world, but they have baths!

Baths made with cypress wood.

Well, I say cypress though I don't know what wood it's actually made of, but it's the best!

So I received a change of clothes from Aunty and entered the bathroom.

Bathroom.

The... bath?!

I looked down my body.

First of all, when I did that as a man, there were no bulging breasts.

But, while moderate, now they definitely held dreams!

"...c-calm down."

I'm no sex offender.

This is my body. Ultimately, this is my body!

And to get into the bath, I have to undress.

"What am I saying, of course I have to, come on..."

Ahaha, I laughed.

My voice was so lovely.

"...huu."

I steeled myself, took off all my clothes and got into the bath.

...while making sure to look as little as possible at myself.

"I'm no chicken, I'm no chicken, blubblub."

I talked into the bath water.

Eh? But I did wash my body before getting in?

Washing yourself before getting into the tub is good manners after all.

Yep, while looking as little as possible, I washed myself relying on sensation alone.

With a somewhat slimy liquid.

Well, it is some kind of soap or body lotion, I think.

Not something used for weird fetishes or so, right?

If it is, I'm going to stab Uncle in the gut some day.

I made that decision and just when I'd stood up to get out, the bathroom door was vigorously opened.

"———Ha?

My thoughts stopped.

When people relax and something unexpected happens to them, they cannot react right away.

"Hee, you're Alice?"

An utterly stark-naked girl was standing in the door.

Sisters

By the time I had caught my bearings again, the enemy had already invaded.

Without reserve she got into the bathtub I was standing in stock still.

HEEEEYYYYYYYY!

"Wash yourself before you get in the tub!"

Nono, is that really what I want to point out here?

I was considerably confused.

"Ehhh, that's such a bother. You're such a sheltered girl, Alice," she complained, but did reluctantly listen to me.

She was surprisingly docile.

Hmhmm, she happily hummed while washing herself.

Nono, what should I be doing in this situation?

Can I just remain a scarecrow?

"E-excuse me...?"

"Oh, I?"

I succinctly nodded.

"I'm the daughter of the house. Name's Shion. Nice to meet you, Alice."

"Haa... it's a pleasure to meet you. ...that's a cool name you have."

Well, I really did think so.

"Right? My stupid pops entrusted his dreams of adventure to me~. Come on, is that really how you name a girl?"

Say what she might, Shion-san isn't as unhappy over it as she would make me believe, either.

Like Uncle and Aunty, she has chestnut-colored hair.

It's cut short, but she has a pretty face and doesn't look particularly boyish.

And.

Her breast are huge!!

What the hell.

Just how much dream did she cram in there?

Did she spend bonus points?

"Hey, Alice, don't be standing there and wash my back, ok?"

"Why do I...," I set on, but obediently did as she asked.

I'm a freeloader.

That must not be forgotten.

"Haa~. Still, Alice, I'm amazed how beautiful you are. Are all elves like that? I've never seen silver hair," Shion-san voiced her impressions as she took a long, hard look at me after we got out of the tub.

For some reason I don't understand, I felt strangely embarrassed and hid my body by hugging myself.

And let me make this clear: This was not a ploy to show off my body!

I was fundamentally embarrassed!

"Ehm... I wonder?"

I've never seen an elf in my life.

As for myself, it's all due to my character creation, the hand of god so to speak.

"You're so sheltered~," Shion-san smiled broadly as I bashfully moved closer.

While putting on an indifferent front, I sat down behind her.

I took a wet towel and washed her back with gentle rubs.

"Hya!"

"Hii!"

Shion-san first yelped and, surprised, I followed suit.

"That tickles, Alice. Put more strength behind it!"

Hmm,

I thought she was about to report me.

Even at the best of times, this situation is dizzying.

I really wish she wouldn't surprise me any more.

"But if I scrub too hard, it's bad for your skin. It would be a waste, you're so pretty, Shion-san."

Eh?

Was this the place for such a line?

My role...

Am I really into my role here?

"D-don't be stupid! Uhh... you're so cheeky, Alice!"

Shion-san looks so cute when she puffs up her cheeks!

Thanks to that, my racing heart slowed just a bit, too.

Disperse, worldy desires!

…

Eh?

Did my current self just have worldy desires?

"... I don't! I mean, I'm a girl..."

I'm super-down now.

Shion-san got worried about me as I started murmuring behind her.

The next day.

Without wasting a moment, I headed out to adventure with Shion-san. First we stopped in the town to get me equipment.

By the way, Shion-san's Status is as follows:

Name: Shion
Race: Human
Age: 17
Gender: Female
Class: Swordsman
Level: 14

Hee~

Is it the wisdom of age? Uncle's level is higher.

Well, he certainly has the abs to match.

Anyway, as a Swordsman, Shion-san fights on the frontline.

Although from the looks of her light armor, she's not a tank.

"Alice, you're a mage, aren't you? Then you can just get your armor from mom."

"Eh? So Tailors really make those?"

"Yeah. By the way, Pops told me to teach you the ropes because of how little you know of the world."

Uncle, good job!

His gentleness is really touching.

"Basically, if you go to any weapons or armor store, you can find mass-produced goods. But to get some of good quality or a one-off item, you have to directly rely on a Smith or Tailor."

One-off!

That's such a nice term.

Personal! Personal is good!

"And, since I'm a Swordsman, I often rely on a Smith for my weapons and armor, but for someone like you, Alice, you get your armor from a Tailor. If it's too heavy, you can't equip it, right? Metal-made stuff or the like."

"Uhhhm."

When they call me that feeble, it hurts the male heart that I have left.

Along the way to the weapon store, I looked all around me.

In the garden of some private house, I found some firewood and an axe to chop it.

"Just wait and see, Shion-san."

"Hey... you are dynamic for the strangest things, Alice."

Seeming to have caught on to what I had found and what I was about to do, she followed me with a sigh.

After getting into the garden, I laid my hands on the axe.

"Unnng!"

"..."

Just from me picking up the axe, Shion-san gave me worried looks!

My Streeength!

I hate my Strength 0!!

But I'm still a former man!

This sensation is deeply carved into my being, I don't forget it so easily!

I'm not some town chick.

Right, back at home I've chopped wood!

"Uuhhhhhnnnn!"

With my arms trembling like a leaf I lifted the axe.

I lowered my hips and took a stance to easily apply my strength.

I tightened my body.

Imagining one rod going through my body, I focused on my trunk.

Right, you don't just swing your arms!

Without using your whole body, you can't split the log!

I finished the preparations and took aim.

"Haaaaah!

Mustering all my strength, I raised the axe above my head and, using the strength of my whole body, swung it at my target.

Thump.

It penetrated for about 10cm.

It went 10cm?

It did, right?

10cm... just what effect did my strength make?

Isn't this just from the weight of the falling axe alone?

"…"

"…"

I gently put the axe back and met Shion-san's eyes.

"What do you think?"

"Yeah... I knew this was gonna happen."

Tehe, so she knew.

After being recognized as feeble and having my male pride shattered into pieces like that, I quietly followed Shion-san to the weapons store.

The house and garden earlier belonged to an acquaintance of Shion-san's so it was settled with an explanation.

Yes.

"A rod, right. Anything else is impossible."

"Yes, I think you're right."

I've become an obedient Alice.

Let's admit it, I have no strength.

But you'll learn sooner rather than later!

I have the world's greatest firepower!

...probably.

"First of all, your first equipment will be a present from me. You're like a little sister to me after all."

"Shion-san..."

In this other world, I got an Onee-chan!

Accompanied by Shion-san, I looked through the equipment in the shop's corner with the rods.

Rod: 100 Rook
Flame Rod: 1000 Rook
Ice Rod: 1000 Rook
Lightning Rod: 1000 Rook

That's the selection of rods the weapon store in this town has.

As Shion-san said, they're mass-produced and lack both a particular quality or inscription.

"Okay, this Rod, then."

"Whyyy are you that reserved? Make it an elemental rod! You're flimsy so you at least need a proper weapon!"

Shion told me off and put the Rod back onto the shelf.

Hmm...

Is she going to be alright?

I don't have a clear grasp of the price level yet, but 1000 Rook seems expensive...

"Don't be so reserved, Alice. Forget that I said you're like a little sister to me, you are my little sister. At least be a little bit selfish!"

Shion-san smiled at me. That smile really reminds of her dad.

Crap, that struck home.

The tears I had held back were coming through.

"Uhh... some dust got in my eye..."

"What are getting all shy for, idiot~."

Shion-san petted my head.

I resisted, but she just went on and tuzzled my hair.

After messing around for a while, I looked straight at Shion-san and said my thanks.

As well as that word.

"Thank you, Onee-chan!"

For some reason that made Shion-san all agitated and flustered.

I've seen that reaction before, but where...

As for the equipment, in the end I had her buy me a Lightning Rod.

And then we went home once and I got a Leather Robe (with Inscription) from Aunty.

Amazingly, it's high quality!

I equipped everything and finally we went out to adventure.

Currently my equipment is as follows:

Weapon: Lightning Rod
Armor: Leather Robe (high quality)(Inscription: Adele)
Accessory: None

Alright, this time I'm sure I can win even against a puppy!

... I hope.

To take a life

Shion-san and I decided to leave the town and head for a ruin in the forest beyond the hill I had first arrived on.

Oh my god!

I'm so excited!

"Onee-chan, is there a demon king in the ruin? If I defeat him, I'll be a hero! What should I do!?"

"Seeing how you can't chop wood, why don't you worry about that later?"

So what!

I don't plan to rely on the strength in my arms!

"We're about to leave the town, so let's form a party now."

"Hm? Party?"

Doesn't forming a party mean heading out together, like we are now?

Shion-san laughed at my usual clueless face.

"There is an Invite entry in the Status, right? You can invite people into your party with that, forming a group of up to six."

"Hee~~"

However, being able to see your Status and requesting to join parties, it's like I'm in a game. But it is another world after all, right?

Hm?

Or is this a game? A dream?

Uhhhhm.

... I guess I should make sure.

That being said, but how do I actually go about that?

For now I can say I get hungry and sleepy.

The five senses are perfectly recreated, too.

Compared to before I was reborn, nothing feels off about my body, either.

…

Well, of course there is a difference.

An extraordinary difference, the one between being a man and a woman.

Probably never before in my life have I been embarrassed to go to the toilet.

And while the standard of living might be higher in modern Japan, it's not that bad here.

I can see that an original culture has developed here.

It's probably too creative to come up in a dream of mine.

Actually, I'm on the verge of admitting I was reborn into another world.

Just.

If I am to fight with monsters, there is one thing I have to make sure of.

That is————damage.

If there are the Status and parties, will the attacks I take from monsters be converted into damage?

In other words, is there pain?

Or is there not?

Will simply a value such as HP go down?

Was there such a value in the Status?

And this is important

Ignoring games for now, can I fight in this reality where my life depends on it? I'm not used to pain.

"... this is the one thing I didn't want to do."

But I still have to do it, before leaving the town.

I looked around and found what I was looking for.

And then I picked that up ———— a pebbly lying at a street corner.

A round pebbly of good size, fitting onto the palm of my hand.

...here I go!

"Come... on!! ~~~~!"

I smashed the pebble against my head with all my strength.

"Haaa!?"

Shion-san was shocked by my cryptic action.

Seeing stars is probably a good expression for me right now.

Fuhh...

"OOWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW! OUCHOUCHOUCH!"

I was rolling over the floor in pain.

This hurts, this freaking hurts!

A dream!?

A game!?

HAHAHAHA!

Fine, I'll admit it.

It doesn't matter anymore what this is.

No matter what, this can only be reality.

I mean it hurts!

It hurts so much I'm crying!!!

"Wai, Alice!? Are you alright!?"

Well... certainly it hurts to smash a pebble against your head.

That goes without saying.

But does it hurt this much?

Is that it?

Does it want to say I'm paper?

Does it want to say I'm freaking tofu with Protection 0?

But I'm a maiden, not tofu...

Anyway, the pain finally subsided and I got up straight.

Verification over.

"... with that out of the way, let's go, Onee-chan."

"Eh? Ah, okay... wait, Alice... is everything alright with your head?"

What exactly do you mean with that, Onee-chan?

...I may have lost more than I thought.

For a while Shion-san gave me lukewarm looks, but that was alright.

After an invitation from Shion-san, the two of us formed a pair party.

Pair hunting!

So nice!

"At first we're going to fight near the town, and once you're used to it, we'll head to the ruins. But since it's meaningless for me to do too much, the fighting will be done mainly by you."

"You're not going to abandon me, are you?"

"You'll be fine, you'll be fine."

Really?

Shion-san, do you properly realize I'm weaker than a puppy?

It's inattentiveness like "That little poses no problem" that leads to great accidents!

"And Alice, don't form parties with just anyone, you hear me? If it's not with people you can trust, or where you won't regret it even if they betray you, it's dangerous."

"Is that so?"

"Fundamentally, money and experience are shared equally between party members, but that doesn't work with drop items. Especially when you find a rare item, it's easy to be stabbed in the back."

"Scary!"

Other worlds are scary!

Is this one of those cases?

Where you're not protected by the law?

Self-responsibility?

"That's why I show my Status to people I decide to party with, without hiding anything. As a sign of trust."

Shion-san showed me her Status up to the details.

Weapon: Eastern Sword (high quality)(Inscription: Izanagi)
Armor: Light Plate (high quality)(Inscription: Kalon)
Accessory: Gale Earring

Skill: Slash

"Onee-chan, that looks really strong!"

"Well, getting your equipment in order is basic for adventurers."

Shion-san said that it wasn't actually that good, but she probably went through a lot of trouble to gather it.

Shion is great because she still doesn't boast!

"I'm going to show you my Attributes, too."

So you can see Attributes, too?

I never knew.

And Shion-san's Attributes are as follows:

Strength 3, Endurance 1, Protection 1, Agility 5, Mind 0

"...Onee-chan, that's so unbalanced."

Seriously!!

Is it okay to have Endurance and Protection both at 1?

"Well, who cares, as long as it doesn't hit me."

Are you like that?

Are you like that red guy, Onee-chan!?[1]

But Agility 5, huh.

There was a genius this close to me.

Frankly, I thought I wouldn't find anyone to beat my 4 Agility for a while.

"Onee-chan... now I'm a little bit worried how reliable you really are..."

"Ehh!? What are your Attributes, then?

"Very well! Feast your eyes, they're amazing!"

Strength 0, Endurance 1, Protection 0, Agility 4, Mind 5

"Hehe!"

"Feeble..."

"That!?"

There is another part that begs even more attention, isn't there!?

"Ehm, Mind 5 might be amazing, but it just doesn't click for me. Well, the 4 in Agility is a bit surprising though."

Well, I haven't properly experienced its amazingness myself yet, so I can't help you there.

"But the 0, 1, 0 is even more of a surprise..."

That's the result?

... I don't even know what you're talking about!

After exchanging the necessary information, we left the town.

From now on, puppies might attack us any time.

Full of vigilance, I looked left and right while carefully making step after step.

Because I was too much of a tortoise, Onee-chan started dragging me along by my neck midway.

"I'm no luggage~!"

"But you're light. Are you eating properly?"

"I've eaten four plates of curry before!"

"Curry?"

Eh?

Curry. Is it not getting translated? I can pronounce it, though.

"It's a food served in bowls, and I've eaten four servings."

"Hee. Just where does all of that fit into your body, hmm?"

"Hehe, are you impressed?"

That's the appetite of a growing boy, hungry after club activities!

"So, how much did you eat yesterday?"

"Rinnal pie, one slice. That's all that fit."

"…"

"…"

She's totally thinking I lied!!

I didn't, but I have no way to prove it!

"Oh? Hey, we have our first customer!"

"Wah!"

A push from Shion-san made me land on the ground.

And before me...

Petite Panther Level 2 has appeared!

Enemy Status confirmed!

Oh!?

So you're here~...

Eh?

Isn't it level 2?

Did I see something wrongly?

"O-Oneechan, leve, enemy!"

"Oh, its level? They fluctuate a bit. Even in the same place."

I haven't heard any of this!?

"Well, you'll manage."

So easygoing!

And why are energetically sitting down over there!?

Are you just watching?

You have no intention whatsoever of helping me, huh!?

"Woah!!"

The level 2 puppy didn't wait for my trembling to settle down.

Of course he didn't!

With my inherent agility, I somehow managed to get past its initial attack.

Alright, bring it on!

I'm also a (former) man!

In my heart, I'm still a man!

That means there are some battles I have to fight!

I held the Lightning Rod before me and carefully closed the distance.

Maybe the level 2 puppy had noticed I'm not the me of the past, because it carefully watched me.

Wait, the one in the past had been impaled by Uncle.

"Here I come!"

With a nimble movement, I smashed the Lightning Rod into the puppy.

"Squeek!"

"Ah, sorry! ———cra!!"

The moment I was inattentive due to pangs of conscience, I almost got bitten for it.

This is dangerous!

Because with the earlier verification I've bitterly experienced how painful such a bite would be!

"What are you doing..."

I could hear Shion say something behind me.

But I ignore her!

Nng, after all fighting for life and death is severe.

This is the law of survival of the fittest.

This is what it means to be an adventurer.

Anybody who doesn't like it can just become a tailor or a smith in town.

But I...

"I have decided already..."

I'm going to live in this world.

I am going to adventure in this world.

Rather than confining myself to my small room, I really think this world is better!

"Haaahhhh!"

After dodging an attack, I hit the puppy with all my might.

At that moment, the Lightning Rod gleamed and lightning washed over the puppy.

It gave one last twitch and stopped moving.

"..."

The puppy dissolved into the world and a Petite Panther's Fur appeared in its place.

A drop of something wetted the fur.

"... Alice, are you sure you can do this?"

"... I ... can."

I've already stained my hands with blood.

If I pulled back here, I would never be able to apologize to the puppy.

My resolve is hard.

But the tears just don't stop.

"Wuaaaaaaahhhhh!"

On that day.
I chose to live by taking lives.

The Ruins in the Forest

Level 3 Woodrobin

After I took my first life, Shion-san and I headed towards the ruins while fighting monsters.

"Hah!"

Inside the forest, the encounter rate was quite high.

I've already lost count.

Shion-san lightly attacked to draw aggro and I was to finish off the monsters.

Drawing aggro means becoming the enemy's target of attack, but, well, if you think about it as the enemy basically going after the most threatening target, it's not too far off.

I mean, currently I cannot really fight.

And this opponent called Woodrobin?

It shoots freaking arrows!

It's a monster, so why does it carry weapons!?

Using branch arms it grew from its stump, this stump held bow and arrows of self-made(?) wood.

Frankly speaking, it's more scary than anything.

In my world, projectile weaponry is the strongest, you know?

Don't bring swords to gun fights.

However.

However!

My Onee-chan made absolutely no issue out of the projectile weapons.

Even now she was lightly twisting her upper body, dodging the arrows.

Shion-san answered my question why she could do that so easily with:

"Eh? If you see their posture, you just have to see through where they're aiming and dodge, right?"

I have no idea what she's talking about.

For example, let's assume that in my world, someone from the mafia or the yakuza aims a gun at you.

It's a gun, so of course it can only shoot straight.

Well, I don't know about people like that guy with the thick eyebrows shooting in G-lines, but still.

Anyway, once you know where the gun is aimed, you only have to sidestep the bullet the moment the trigger is pulled.

That's her claim.

"Agility 5, huh."

I feel like I've caught a glimpse of something tremendous.

"Alice, don't space out!"

"Y-yes!"

In a rush, I circled behind the stump and attacked it with the Lightning Rod.

In about one out of five hits, the lightning strike happens.

This time, I got the lightning strike on the first hit and successfully defeated the stump.

"Fuh..."

In all likelihood, I think a Lightning Rod of a better quality will cause lightning strikes with a higher probability.

Weapons are important.

For drop items, there was a medicinal plant, so I picked it up.

Then I diligently, warily turned around.

"Hoh~? You think I'd stab you in the back? Is that it what it says? Your attitude?"

Shion-san smoothly laid a hand on her Eastern Sword (high quality) and smiled darkly at me.

"C-come on! I'm just putting your teachings about adventuring to practice, right?"

Well, let's not mess around too much.

Even the best of friends need proper respect.

"Oh, well. It's time to go home for the day."

"Eh? But we haven't gone to the ruins yet?"

Seeing as we had just entered the forest with them, the ruins themselves were nowhere to be seen.

"It's fine. Besides, no reason to hurry, is there?"

"I can still go on."

"No, you can't."

"Why? The sun's not going down, either."

Shion-san looked at me and sighed greatly.

"Anyone would agree with me if they so much as looked at you."

"..."

Actually, after my crying fit, Shion-san tried to stop our outing and we only got this far because I had obstinately refused.

That made rejecting her concerns now all the harder.

"... alright."

Like this, Shion-san's and my first day of adventuring came to an end.

The enemies we encountered on the meadow on the way back were wordlessly cut down by Shion-san.

I came home, had dinner, took a bath and huddled on the bed in the room (my own one!) that Aunty had prepared for me.

To put it clearly, I was down.

I still couldn't forget the sensation in my hand.

"If only I could use magic, I wouldn't get this sensation..."

No, that's not quite right.

Without this sensation, it would feel like a game where pushing one button sends out missiles and ends the war.

I'm sure what I'm feeling right now is important.

As harsh as it is for someone from modern Japan like me.

At that point, I noticed I hadn't checked the fruits of the day's efforts.

I looked at my Status.

Name: Alice
Race: Halfelf
Age: 15
Gender: Female
Class: Apprentice Mage
Level: 4

Oh?

Level 4?

It went up that much?

I didn't notice at all.

Skill: None
Magic: Can choose initial magic

"...eh?"

Magic: Can choose initial magic

I reflexively did a double-take.

I... can use magic?

While reigning in my impatience, I selected the entry called Magic Settings.

Fire
Blizzard
Thunder

Looks like I have to choose one of the three.

I see. Interesting!

If I'm right, then Mages in this world are specialized.

So, which do I pick?

But while I ask myself that, actually I've already made my decision.

Thunder

That's the one.

Why?

Because I like it.

That's it.

Got a problem?

Anyhow, with this I've set my initial magic and can use Thunder now.

I should.

"I wanna try it out..."

I think I'm a very self-centered person.

A fire was lit inside my heart that was down until a moment ago.

At times like this, I'm the type that can't stay still.

I changed from my house clothes into my equipment and sneakily left my room.

Light leaked out of Shion-san's room.

I quietly moved past it.

Uncle was in the living room.

"Mm? Alice-chan? ... what's with that getup?

Uncle was clearly suspicious of my outfit.

...nggg, so you're getting in my way, Uncle?

Like I'll let you!

"Nichol-san."

"Yes?"

"Please be silent and let me pass."

"Well, I can't do that, can I? I think as you are now, you shouldn't go outside. Besides, the sun's gone down."

Hey, now's not the time for disputes like this!

If Shion-san finds me, it's all over!

I'm just no match for her!

"...please let me pass."

"I can't."

"...Dad."

Uncle. Twitched.

"Please let me pass, Dad. In silence, right now."

"..."

"Otherwise, I'll never think of you as Dad ever again."

"Please go."

Uncle was weirdly stiff about it, but he opened the way.

Too easy.

After getting out of the house, it had really gotten pitch dark.

There are kind of street lights, but regretfully not that many.

By the way, the illumination used in street lights and homes are not lamps, but special, magic crystals.

Anyhow, there are too few of them so they can't banish the darkness.

It's completely different from modern Japan.

Well, on the other hand the stars and the moons (moons?) seem all the brighter for it.

"I can already cross the meadow... wonder if I can get to the ruins?"

I do think this is foolhardy.

Have I just made a normal decision, or have I not?

Only the people around me can answer that.

But I stealthily left the town.

I left the town, arbitrarily shook off the enemies I encountered on the meadow and reached the forest.

My night vision is surprisingly good.

Even with moonlight alone, it's rather bright... is the feeling I get.

No, I can see too well.

I'm seeing too well here.

"Elven eyes?"

Otherwise, the difference to the night vision I've had so far is too big.

Well, I'm only a halfelf though.

But like this, I can also guarantee my vision even inside the forest.

Nobody should catch me unprepared and I'm also not going to flail around, no idea what I'm doing.

——————is what I thought at some point.

"Uhhhm, where am I?"

Shortly after entering the forest.

I lost my way.

I've taken the forest too lightly.

Being able to see, not being able to see, nothing of that matters.

Don't underestimate nature.

In the first place, I only heard that the ruins are in the forest, so how did I hope to actually find them?

If you act on an impulse, nothing good's gonna come of it.

In the first place, if you can see but lose your way, what's to stop you from going in circles in the same place?

From what I've heard, if you get lost in a deep forest, you can't walk straight for even twenty meters.

"Uhhhm."

Knowledge for when you're lost, number 1.

Method: Left Hand Rule.

If you stick with your left hand to the trees on the left side of the path and move forward, you'll eventually get out of the forest.

"But I refuse!"

I mean, what if I try to touch a tree in this darkness and my hand hits a hairy caterpillar or so?

It's impossible!

Number 2.

Method: Trémaux's Algorithm

Mark the ways you've gone, exploring all possibilities until you're out.

I can make marks in the ground with my rod.

However!

"I don't have the endurance for it!"

Damn my Endurance 1!

But this is a problem.

I don't run into many enemies, but it's a problem.

Oh, the urban legend that monsters grow more active at night is probably a lie.

They're sleeping. Look, the Woodrobin over there.

Now, let sleeping dogs lie, yes.

I randomly walked through the pitch dark, silent forest.

I've grown up in the boonies, so this darkness doesn't freak me out.

Furthermore, I have this night vision.

It's not that scary.

But I wonder how far I've walked.

By the time another fear, Shion-san's gonna kill me come sunrise, started going through my head, I finally saw them.

"Ruins... found!"

In a place so open I thought I'd left the forest for a moment stood a worn-down structure.

... by the way, my first objective was coming to the ruins, was it?

Well, fine.

Magic

At first I walked around the ruins in something like a sightseeing mood.

I like ruins.

They're romantic

Be it ancient Japanese burial mounds, the Great Wall of China, Machu Picchu, I'd wanted to make a tour around the world to all those relics of history.

So I think I'll use this other world and tour ruins as much as I like.

"Hmm? So it's not that big..."

When I tried it, going around it once took about five minutes.

Five minutes by foot.

Because my pace was slow-ish while taking a closer look, its out circumference is probably around 250 meters.

Roughly the same as the 200 meters track around a sports field?

I'd intended to make sure of the scale before going in, but at this size, I'm not going to get lost, am I?

I can do this... I think.

If it gets dangerous, I can just fall back immediately.

Can I really say 'Nahhh, better not' after coming all this way?

"Hehee, unfortunately, I'm no coward!"

Unfortunately, huh...

Pushed by my baseless confidence, I came to the magic circle at what I assume to be the ruins' front side.

I wonder, do they use magic crystals for magic circles?

The one before me is shining faintly.

Is this the entrance?

Since I haven't seen something like a physical entrance into the inside of the ruins, thinking so is natural.

For another world.

I'm sure I'm going to be teleported into the ruins from here.

...yeah, I'm going to be alright, aren't I?

It's not a trap, is it?

I'm not going to burn in the flames of hell the moment I step into the magic circle?

After getting so far, I'd lost a bit of my nerve, but I nevertheless softly stepped into the circle.

It only gently shone.

Phew, it didn't suddenly flare up bright enough to destroy my eyes.

And while I thought that, I stopped being able to see the scenery outside the circle.

I was surrounded by a wall of fleeting, white light, but after a few seconds it died down.

The scenery outside... has completely changed.

I'm inside now.

Is the wall itself out of magic crystal? It's shining in a light green.

Be that as it may, I'm clearly inside the ruins.

"Fantasy indeed..."

Really impressive.

I left the magic circle and checked my surroundings.

There didn't seem to be anything but the magic circle in the room.

I was interested where the corridor led that was visible through the room's one exit.

I carefully stuck my head through the doorway and checked the corridor in both directions.

Right, dead end.

Left, Mister Bear.

"....."

Hm?

Let's check this once more.

Right... the corridor ends right there.

Left... Mister Bear, even closer than before.

Level 10 Ruin Bear

The Enemy Status popped up inside my head.

"Waaaiii! Level 10!?"

I had already drawn aggro and Mister Bear was charging down the narrow corridor.

CRAPCRAPCRAPCRAP!!

What kind of horror movie is this!

A disaster movie is nothing in comparison!

I can't think any human would think of fighting that Mister Bear if it came charging at them while slinging drool left and right.

No objections allowed!

So, time for a tactical retreat.

I hurried back into the room and quickly got onto the magic circle.

———but nothing happened.

"I really didn't want such jokes right NOOOOOOW!!!!"

What's with this piece-of-junk magic circle, did it break!?

What!?

What's going on here!?

... don't tell me!

Entrance and exit are not the same!?

To get out of here, I have to find the exit magic circle, is that it!?

"Grrrrr."

Mister Bear quietly planted himself in the exit.

Now I had no way to leave or fall back, my last stand was complete.

For an instant I considered playing dead.

But if I do that, I might very well really die, so let's not try.

While shedding cold sweat, I grasped my Lightning Rod.

If I hit the bear with this thing's lightning strike, even it shouldn't come out unscathed.

I'd slip past that front paw and hit him.

I can do it, I can do it.

I just need to tell myself that.

Concentrate.

Probably, one hit will result in instant death.

Even if it's only knowledge from modern Japan, but I've heard that, for example, an Asian black bear can pulverize a horse's or cow's neck with one hit from its front paws.

Or that some famous martial artist, when asked if he could defeat a bear, had laughed and declared that it was impossible for humans to do.

I dare say he was right!

Sweat ran down my cheek.

The bear planted himself before its prey.

I-is this the imposing, bipedal stance bears are famous for?

Being treated to it in person, no way to deal with bears came to mind, nothing at all.

Anyhow, I need to take the initiative!

That's everything!

Right, I'm going to read the opponent's attack like Shion-san.

I stopped even breathing and waited for that moment.

The bear's center of balance shifted... I think.

In the next moment, its forepaws came rushing down at me.

"———!!"

Since I had sensed the preparatory movements, I evaded by a hair's breadth by letting myself fall down before stepping up to the bear.

"Please!!"

I smashed Lightning Rod into bear belly.

A flash came from the rod's magic crystal.

The lightning strike succeeded!!

Being so close to the bear was scary, so I immediately backed away.

I backed away and prayingly looked at the bear.

"Grrr"

Mister Bear, going strong!

There seems to be some damage, but it's nothing fatal.

It's looking at me with some wariness.

————to be honest: I'm on the verge of despair.

By chance, my first attacked triggered the lightning strike, but to trigger another one, I need an average of five more hits.

That's probably impossible.

Slipping past its attack five times and attacking... is probably impossible.

Why did I come to this place in the first place again?

What had I gotten excited for and come to the ruins alone?

Even if I said I could use magic, that's no reason to come in here before testing it.

I've certainly been a bit too excited.

"... use it?"

Could I even use it?

Although I was too cornered to rely on it?

However, originally my goal has not been coming to the ruins, but to test my magic.

Alright, I'm going to show it here and now.

Or rather, I've got no other choice.

The time for crying has passed.

Do it if you don't want to die!

In my head, I imagined my Status and the use of magic.

I understood the necessary information.

Thunder: 10s cast time, 10s cooldown

Well, at the moment the cooldown doesn't matter.

If it takes ten seconds to cast, one shot is all I have.

(Thunder, activate)

I willed, and waited.

Countdown, 10

Along with the beginning of the cast time, my body got hot.

The bear began signs of attacking again.

It slowly but steadily closed the distance.

Without any rash movements, I matched its advance and fell back until I couldn't anymore.

My back touched the wall.

The bear moved even closer.

I didn't want to enter its space until the last possible second.

Along the wall, I fled into a corner.

The corner furthest away from the door.

I genuinely had nowhere left to run.

Slowly the bear came closer to end it.

Then it could reach.

It was in range.

The bear's center of gravity lowered.

Count, 5

Maybe it was due to the mana, but my body was lightly glowing.

The bear threw himself on me.

I somehow let myself fall on my backside and let the charge pass over my head.

I hadn't aimed for it, but the corner was too small for the bear to bring its arms to use well.

That's why the bear came biting at me with its boasted fangs.

I thrust the Lightning Rod into its snout and somehow or other kept it in check.

However, our strength was too different.

It tore the rod from my hands with its brutal strength alone.

With this, I was completely checkmated.

With a bite, it could take my head right off.

I thrust both my hands at the bear.

————I could do this!

Count, 0!

"Split the heavens and become a ray of light, to strike my enemies———— Thunder!!!"

Radiant lightning pierced the bear's body.

Threads of lightning discharging streamers into the floor, electrifying it.

Like time had stopped, the bear and I remained still.

I had felt the spell connect.

Slowly, the bear's eyes turned inside out and drool dripped from its mouth.

And still, the bear loomed over me.

"Hii!?"

Is it impossible?

Is it impossible with my level 4 magic?

I even shouted that super-embarrassing chant as it came to mind! This is too much!

My eyes turned teary, and I closed them

"……?"

When the bear didn't bite me no matter how much time passed, I squinted my eyes open, but it was nowhere to be seen.

Instead, a drop item had fallen down.

———Bear Ears

"And what should I do with this?"

I picked up the Bear Ears, puzzled.

They were rather fluffy.

... hmm, am I gonna make it to the exit?

Bonds

After fighting my way through the life-and-death struggle with the bear, I first of all decided to make a few experiments with my lifeline, magic.

So now I'm still in the same room, sitting on the floor and thinking carefully.

Knowing yourself is important.

First, there's simply the power.

You can say that the results allow me to have quite high hopes in that regard.

The magic of level 4 me has felled the level 10 bear in one strike.

Well, I also hit the bear with a lightning strike from the Lightning Rod, so another test is required to see if one strike really is enough though.

One strike, or not.

If I am to fight alone, that difference is huge.

I can't think that the Lightning Rod's lightning strikes are more powerful than my Thunder, so I can defeat bears with two strikes at most, but there's a trap in the cast time and the cooldown.

Thunder: 10s cast time, 10s cooldown.

If acting in a party, those time windows shouldn't cause problems.

Of course, that assumes the party has someone holding up the frontline.

"Without a tank, the backline can't shine...?"

The firepower is plenty though.

So, does a Mage require a party after all?

For argument's sake, let's assume I hadn't put my leftover Attribute points into Agility, but had gone for Endurance 2 and Protection 3.

Would I have survived my run-in with the bear?

Endurance 2 is average.

Protection 3 is good.

And since I can't change Mind 5, Agility would be 0.

With that setup, I cannot expect to slip past the earlier paw attacks like I had.

So would I have taken the attack and survive?

"An attack from those paws that pulverize horse and cow necks?

That's probably impossible.

The level difference was too big, too.

So, should I have gone full-out with Protection 5?

That would've changed nothing, either.

Normally thinking, you can do nothing with Endurance 0.

For a Mage going solo, the way I spent my Attribute points isn't wrong.

Endurance 2, Protection 5, Mind 3 is an option, too, but decreasing its greatest charm, the firepower, goes against my thoughts a little.

A Mage equipping a shield and standing on the frontline.

Well, there are probably a few of those in this world.

(Thunder, activate)

Let's try shooting it at a nearby wall for a test.

Actually, I've already tried it before. I don't particularly need to target a monster to use magic.

I can probably use it against humans, too, of course.

During the 10s cast time, I can actually feel my body generate the mana required to shoot the magic.

It doesn't mean that I actually need to say a 10 second long chant.

"Thunder!"

Lightning raced towards the wall.

"I see."

And apparently I don't have to say the chant at the end, either.

However, the lightning feels darker than when I did say it.

I need to test it in practice later, but I can probably think of it having less power, too.

And then there is the cooldown.

Maybe my body is lacking the mana after using the magic, but at least I feel languid.

The cooldown time feels like the time it takes for my body to restore the mana inside it from the air surrounding me.

Why? Because even now lightly glowing particles gather around my body and I start slowly feeling better.

The time that takes? Ten seconds.

————so, can I cast another spell before that time is up?

I once more willed the magic to activate.

The light particles that had still been gathering around my body stopped that and switched to magic activation.

The cooldown was stopped and my sensation changed to that of mana being generated from within my body.

"Thunder!"

I dropped against the wall again.

————the moment the spell activated, a dizzying feeling of exhaustion assaulted me.

This seems like the side effect from not accommodating the cooldown, in other words the time it takes for my body to naturally recover its mana.

Let me focus on recovering for a while and steady my breath.

So this is how it feels to run out of gas.

But if this is it, I can ignore the cooldown when push comes to shove.

There's no need to push myself too much, but knowing it never hurts.

Most importantly, if I'm solo I can only use this as a finisher.

If I can't win with it yet make myself stagger this much, it's over.

Applying it to this place I'm in right now, it's effective against the bears if I can't defeat them with one hit.

I'll still have to work a means to overcome the 10s casting time no matter what though.

"Hmm..."

Then there is the amount of mana I can store in my body, doesn't it change a lot with level and Attributes?

Apprentice Mage Level 5

I leveled up earlier, so I'm level 5 now.

Some time I'll need to try out how much I can ignore the cooldown without running out of gas.

And then———

Magic: Thunder (Proficiency 1)

This Proficiency entry is fairly intriguing.

Shooting the wall like I've been doing is not counted.

It likely increases by defeating enemies and the like.

(Proficiency, huh)

I have various ideas on it, but only time will tell what it exactly does.

And with that, I've finished the verifications I can do myself, I guess?

What's going to happen once I learn Double Cast and Cast Time Reduction?

There are so many things I still don't understand.

"... a mentor would be nice..."

I really want one.

I really want many things.

But, well, now's not the time for that.

How am I going to get back?

That's the question.

I can fight against bear-class enemies while buying time for ten seconds.

"Hmmm... it seems really short, yet long..."

Ten seconds.

That's around the time a world athlete takes to run 100m.

Thinking about it like that, it seems like the blink of an eye.

Now, what should I do...

————and while I was thinking that, the entrance magic circle started shining.

Eh, someone's coming?

In the middle of the night?

Wait, so did I.

Just sitting around and blanking out felt dangerous, so I moved into the corner of the room and readied the Lightning Rod.

From the light appeared————

"O-Oneechan...?"

How did you know I'm here?

That's what I was mainly confused about.

Hearing my voice, Shion-san turned around.

"————oh Lord."

Shion-san murmured something.

Then she came towards me with long steps.

BAM!

That was quite a magnificent sound.

I've been slapped.

"Ah———"

Rather than hurt, everything went pure white.

And while I was dumbfounded, Shion-san checked my body here and there.

"Arms, legs, all there..."

She finished her check and grabbed me by the collar.

My legs lifted off the ground.

Can't, breathe...!

"——Does it hurt? Good. That's nothing to the pain you caused Pops and Mom."

"..."

———I couldn't say anything.

"Just how selfishly have you lived so far!? Were you some caged bird? Or some Miss Happy-go-lucky? Hm!?"

Shion-san's words, hurt.

She choked me to the limit, and when I thought I'd suffocate, she shoved me against the wall.

My legs couldn't muster any strength and I sank to the floor right there.

"——*cough*! Hah, ha"

I lowered my eyes as I got my breathing under control.

Scared, I couldn't look up at Shion-san.

My body was trembling.

This is scarier than facing the bear.

Now, I should rather say the kind of fear is different.

Fighting with monsters feels like a game.

——Confronting people, that's real.

"I... I..."

Shion-san grabbed my trembling shoulders once more.

"—— but you know... the fact that you idiot are safe... I'm really so glad. Stupid Alice."

And just like that, she pulled me in and closed me into her arms.

Shion-san was...

"So glad... I'm really..."

She was crying.

Ahh... I see.

This, this is no game, and I'm not alone either.

"I'm sorry..."

I've done something stupid.

"I'm really... sorry..."

"Really now, stupid!"

Voom, she hit her forehead against mine.

Ouch.

Shion-san was a crying mess.

"... can I... still... call you Onee-chan?"

That earned me another headbutt.

Ouch.

"Stupid... no matter how stupid you are, you cannot cut family ties that easily, you stupid Alice!"

"Haha... you're calling me stupid too much."

"I'm not doing it enough, stupid."

Shion-san hugged me once more with all her strength.

The sensation was so incredibly warm. I hugged her back.

Ah. Interacting with people, facing people...

It's so scary...

...and it makes you so happy.

I really was an idiot, I get that now.

And from the bottom of my heart, I'm grateful.

"... thank you, Onee-chan."

I wanted to convey the words from noon once more, coming from the heart this time.

A Day of Punishment

You could very well call it inevitable.

After our reunion, Shion-san led us through the ruins straight to the exit.

Finding out what else the ruins held would wait for another time.

The exit wasn't that far away.

On the way, we encountered bears twice, but with Shion-san, they posed no problem whatsoever.

...really none whatsoever.

I'm not going to be surprised anymore.

But this time, it was Shion-san's turn to be surprised.

"Eh!? One hit!?"

Her eyes widened at the power of the Thunder I had let loose from behind her.

Apparently my Thunder does have the power to fell bears in one hit.

Well, that still doesn't give any new, weird ideas.

And then we returned to Rinnal.

To my home (temporary).

"And this person, he was so worried about you, Alice-chan, he went round and round and round in circles, you know? He just should've kept you here in the first place, right?"

Right?

Aunty was talking to me with a smile on her face, but I just couldn't get myself to say "yes".

I only apologized.

I profoundly apologized to Uncle, too.

There was this weird feeling of guilt pushing me.

By the way, Shion-san had found uncle acting suspiciously, cornered him with questions and found out about my outing that way.

She'd managed to find me because apparently I'd still been partied with her and through looking at the Status, it seems you can roughly locate your party members.

No, really, I'm sorry.

I clenched my fists, resolved myself and presented Uncle my head.

It's still scary though.

I mean, I don't think (leveled up to) level 6 me's armor stand up to an attack from level 38 Uncle.

However, Uncle...

"Some recklessness suits you young'uns just fine."

And then he made a sombre face and went into the house.

Behind us, Aunty and Shion-san were whispering.

"Oh? He clearly loves Alice."

"Come on, that man. That's so wrong for his age."

Uuuncle?

I'm not into men...

The next day, I was prohibited from adventuring.

As punishment, I was to help all around the house, run errands and the like.

It's a punishment in name, but since I'm a freeloader I think helping out is natural. They're really a nice family.

"For the floor, it's okay if I sweep it with the broom and clean it with a cloth afterwards, right?"

Since it's early in the morning, I'm to start with the cleaning.

Unsurprisingly my long hair would get in the way, so I got it tied into a ponytail with a ribbon from Aunty.

No, I never said I want a ribbon!?

Aunty did it for me, okay!

"Oh my, you're so cute, Alice-chan!

"Eh, really? Really..."

It's fine that she's happy over it, but I can't honestly share that feeling. Is that due to my male heart?

I don't want to lose it, that feeling.

My eyes met Uncle's, who had taken position on the sofa in the living room.

With his dandy face he gave me an approving nod.

... it's not like I care, but doesn't this guy have a job to do?

What day is it again today?

For now, let's ignore the sloth and start working.

The house is built with wood, so the cleaning is basically the same as it was in school.

By the way, we get water from the well.

It seems there's abundant underground water that's easily tapped with a hand pump.

The pump is right in the garden, so the labor is not that heavy.

...if you have normal Endurance and Strength.

"Fuhhh, fuhhh!"

Filling the bucket and carrying it back inside is quite exhausting.

There may be more than plenty of water underground, but I should still treasure the water I fetch.

Water, precious.

Alright, everything's prepared, let's start cleaning from the high places.

Cleaning 101.

I began wiping the tops of the shelves and the window frames with a cloth.

"Windows, huh... I wonder how they make the glass."

"Well, with alchemy of course."

Of course, huh, is that so.

Shion-san had come out of her room, replied to my murmur and gone back into her room.

When I turned around, Aunty was sewing at the living room table.

Her hands were glowing.

She was changing the Petite Panther's Furs I had provided into a Leather Robe.

There's no denying it's handmade, yet different from being sewn stitch by stitch.

Fantasy, is amazing.

And Uncle, still sitting on the sofa, gave me a thumbs up.

Whatever, just get to work.

After cleaning the bath, I cleaned the kitchen and then the rest of the house, apart from everyone's rooms.

Because I got up so early, the sun hasn't completely risen yet.

This world isn't yet enslaved to time through clocks.

When the sun may or may not have completely gone up, the church bell rings, and when it may or may not have gone down, it rings once more.

So in the morning, the bell rings with sunrise.

Well, I like it better when the time flows leisurely like this.

The Japanese are too hectic.

For lunch, I ate a bit of the bread Aunty had prepared.

I again confirmed once more that the food isn't that different.

The bread was just like baguette, with some sort of meat and something like lettuce sandwiched in it.

I really want mustard.

As far as appetite goes, I really can't eat anymore since my body shrunk.

One slice of bread, cut so that it fits on the palm of my hand, is the limit.

Uncle and Shion-san are total gluttons though, they eat uncut breads whole.

They must have a high Engel's coefficient[1].

From noon, I was to run errands.

With that, I should learn a bit about the price level, too.

Aunty gave me 100 Rook and sent me on my first errand.

1 Rook = 1 copper coin.

100 Rook = 1 silver coin.

10.000 Rook = 1 gold coin.

That's how the money in this world works.

I received one silver coin and put it into the small pouch hanging from my belt.

All things considered, this is a tranquil town.

Well, my family home was in the boonies, so it's no big difference to there.

"Ahhh, there's a weird Silver Hair! Silver Hair, Silver Hair!"

On the way, some weird stupid brat picked a fight with me.

It's annoying, but I don't want to cause Shion-san trouble, so let's not be rash.

"Ahh, you."

"I'm Kal!"

...so?

So what?

Why did you just introduce yourself so triumphantly?

You're just Stupid Brat with somewhat reddish, frizzy hair.

"... ehhhm, Kal-kun?"

"You, what grade are you in?"

Maybe I should tear him a new one after all?

I wonder, do I gain proficiency from releasing magic against humans?

I'm suddenly in the mood for some inhuman experiments.

"I'm... Alice..."

However!

I'm also reflecting at the moment!

I'm not going to cause problems!

"Alice~? Silver-Haired Alice~! So weird!"

He ran circles around me as if he'd found something funny.

Just when I had started to rather seriously think about bringing hell on earth upon this brat, someone hit him over the head with their fist.

"Agh, OWWW!"

"You're an embarrassment, so stop! I'm really sorry!"

A girl with the same somewhat reddish, frizzy hair as the stupid brat.

Her skin is a healthy light brown and the freckles suit her superbly.

His sister, probably, earnestly apologized for the stupid brat and dragged him away.

"Haa..."

That's one of the things that happened.

And like that, I went along the main road and toured the shops. Although it was noon, there weren't many people around.

A fruit store, a vegetable store, a butcher, there was even a fish dealer.

Since they have fish, does that mean there's a sea nearby?

I can't think they'd refrigerate the fish and carry it from afar.

For the time being, I went around the shops without buying anything.

One rinnal costs 3 Rook.

A vegetable that looks like nothing but a large radish costs 1 Rook.

A fillet of unidentifiable meat, 5 Rook.

4 Rook for a mackerel-looking fish.

Well, even if I buy foodstuff for the whole family and go back, there'll be change left.

They left what I buy to me, too, since I'm in charge of dinner for the day, so I guess I'll make curry. I can make it after all.

"Hm?"

Just when I was about to start buying, a large carriage came onto the main road.

It seemed unusual for the residents as well, as it gathered a lot of stares.

Of course, I'm part of that crowd, too.

The carriage has a splendid design and is a pleasure to behold for a newbie at other worlds like me.

... is what I thought at first, but there's something slightly ominous about it.

Taking a closer look at it as it comes closer, the load area is built like a cage.

It remains a fact though that it's extremely impressive.

A cage blending into that design.

That's my impression.

And the coachman handling the horse as well the man sitting beside him are considerably suspicious, too.

The coachman wears a quite unsociable, cold expressionlessness, but with his black hair and black eyes, well, he's handsome.

He still has a mean look in the eyes.

Age-wise... maybe around Uncle's age?

He still has a mean look in the eyes.

"..."

I stared at him too intensely, so our eyes met.

Well, I don't care.

The man in the prime of his life next to him brought about the intensity of a mafioso, so to speak.

He had his hair all swept back and covered one eye with an eye-patch like Captain Hook.

His appearance implied there was no way he could be anything respectable.

Ahh, I mustn't get involved here.

If I do, Shion-san will be mad at me again.

I'm not interested! To get back to my shopping I... was on the verge of turning around.

I was on the verge, but.

As the carriage went past me, I could finally see what was on the loading area and turned back.

As I was the only person moving weirdly amidst the staring crowd, the person on the loading area shifted her attention to me, too.

She is around my age now?

Shoulder-length blond hair.

Tired green eyes, despaired of the world.

Her breasts don't have the volume of Shion-san's, but her body is round where it counts and tight where it's right; a model figure different from mine.

Like an exhibition piece, she was carried in the cage.

No, she was put on exhibition.

"A slave?"

Maybe she picked up my murmured words, or maybe she guessed them, but she sorrowfully cast down her eyes.

The carriage just continued down the street.

Finally the people turned audience noisily returned to their daily work.

Among them, I continued to look after the carriage until the end.

Before it disappeared, I think "She" turned around and met my eyes once more.

About money

I made stew for dinner.

I couldn't find roux, so a stew without roux it is.

Melt some butter and stir-fry the ingredients.

For seasonings, salt and pepper.

Once it's heated properly, add wheat flour to bring out the thickness of the consomme soup.

Finally add milk and cook it well.

Ahh, just like with rinnals, their names might not be the same, but as long as the taste is the same, there's no problem.

No problem at all.

I basically make no mistakes when it comes to housework.

I don't think it's annoying, and if I do well, I can live every day in a nice atmosphere.

"So good! What is this? I've never seen anything like it, but it's great! Alice, you were good at cooking?"

"Well, I'm not bad."

Shion-san had high praise for me.

"Really, Alice-chan, you're so girlish."

"I-is that so? I think there are cooking men, too, though?"

There's one right in front of you, you know?

"You can become a bride any time!"

Aunty got that distant look in her eyes.

Nono, don't try to throw me out, okay?

Don't sell me!

"... a... wife?"

Ossan is trembling like a leaf, but let's ignore him.

I'm not the only one, you know?

Everyone does.

"By the way, Onee-chan, there's something I wanted to ask you..."

"Hmm, what's up?"

She held her plate out to me for seconds, so I filled it up and gave it back to her.

I wonder if she can eat all that?

"Can I buy a slave?"

"Ahh, from noon, right? They did cause some rumors... you saw them, Alice?"

"I was on the main street just then."

And I can't think of it as someone else's business, either.

In the very beginning, if Uncle had hypothetically been a bad guy, wouldn't I have been sold as a slave or something?

I might have been put onto such a carriage, too, like cattle.

And what would be the fate of a slave like me?

Ahh~

That goes without saying.

"Hmm? Well, you can. Anyone can, if they have the money."

Money, huh.

I got the change from my errands at noon as pocked money, but with that...

"Hmm... and about how much do they cost?"

"Well, that depends on the slave, but... let's see."

Shion gave me a dirty look and made a wicked face.

"For example, a girl like you... 50 gold coins. Around 500.000 Rook, I guess?

"...Your face is wicked, Onee-chan."

But wait a second.

How much money is that actually?

For today's dinner, I've used 20 Rook.

Ahh, if I think about it like that, I received a considerable amount of spending money. Thank you, Aunty.

So, lunch also costs around 20 Rook; breakfast... well, for simplicity's sake, let's also make it 20 Rook.

Together, that means it takes 60 Rook for a family of four to live one day.

Water is free from the well.

Magic crystals are used for light. They're consumable goods like light bulbs, but they shine by their own power so there's nothing like electric utility fees.

Fire comes from firewood, and fire crystals.

Fire crystals are like magic crystals, but they give off flames and are used in the kitchen.

For heating up the bath and the like, it's firewood.

Uncle chops it.

"Ehhhm?"

Seeing me in deep thought, Shion-san smiled gently.

That smile suits you, Onee-chan.

You don't buy consumable goods every day, so there aren't many daily expenses other than food, huh?

Of course, there's probably taxes or something, but let's ignore those for the moment.

So, if I calculate with a rough estimate of 80 Rook a day, I can include average expenses for consumables?

"How many days does a year have again?"

"365 of course."

"And the world is round?"

What the heck is this girl talking about? Is that what your eyes are saying? I see.

Please don't burn me at the stake.

"Which means..."

80 Rook times 365 days means with 29.220 Rook we can live for a year.

Roughly 3 gold coins.

"..."

With 3 gold coins, a family of four can live for a year.

So?

"How much... would I cost again?"

"500.000 Rook."

You look like you're enjoying yourself, Onee-chan.

"... around 17 years for a family of four?"

Eh, what's with that scary amount of money?

No no, this is only living expenses. Equipment for adventuring costs money, too, and there are other necessary expenses as well.

Humans need a certain amount of luxury, to reward themselves.

Not everybody's some enlightened Buddha after all...

"... you're not going to sell me, are you?"

"Hmm.... I wonder? If you're too stupid... I don't know...

Crap, Onee-chan's sadistic side has come forth.

Then, Aunty!

All smiles.

I can't read her.

Is this the skill of adults?

Okay, as a last resort, Uncle!

"...!"

Why did you twitch!?

Why are your eyes wet!?

Adults play dirty...

"Money is scary..."

I want to protect my innocent heart.

But I see, to buy that girl, I need around 500.000 Rook.

... she was super-pretty and all.

The next day, Shion-san and I went to the ruins.

Looks like Shion-san is going to put her own adventuring aside and accompany me until I clear these ruins.

"Alice, you might be stronger than I thought, you know? Still feeble."

"The last word was unnecessary."

We got in from the entrance, fought off several bears and did not turn towards the exit, but the central part of the ruins.

Thunder: 10s cast time, 10s cooldown (Proficiency 8)

Following behind Shion-san, I checked the magic I have.

It looks like at proficiency 8, there are no changes yet.

Even if the power has changed, since I only need one hit for a bear anyway I frankly have no idea.

"So, what's in these ruins?"

"The central room has the Wellspring of Blessings."

"Wellspring of Blessings?"

"Yeah, if a level 10 apprentice drinks from it and gains its blessing, he or she can class-up. The first step in becoming a true adventurer."

So this is where you class-up.

No, I've wondered myself how long it would take until I could get rid of the apprentice.

"Hee~. And there are springs like this all throughout the world?"

"Well, yeah. It would be a mess if you could only class-up here, right?"

Well, of course.

"Generally towns form near ruins like this. It's a good place for apprentices to train, too, and all."

Although I got into a life-and-death situation here.

"Only for the sake of adventurers?"

"Nah, that would be too much after all. Around ruins with Wellsprings of Blessings, there's a lot of underground water, you see. That makes it easy for people to live there."

I see, so that's why.

"But doesn't that mean the water from the well in the garden comes from the Wellspring of Blessings, too?"

Can't I just drink there?

"Haha, that's true. The central room of the ruins, it's really lit up by magic crystals. You have to drink the water there to get the blessing."

"So I can't cheat."

"Exactly."

Level 11 Maneater

While we were chatting, we encountered a new enemy.

It has a dreadful name, but it's just a green blob.

Or rather, it's a slime.

I finally met a slime!

"Physical attacks don't work well against these, so Alice, if you please."

Shion drew her sword and went ahead to buy me time.

The slime attacked by whipping with tentacles formed from its own body.

So it doesn't simply tackle you?

Scary!

As always, Shion-san dodged those with light movements.

What's with this sense of security.

However, isn't she done for once one attack hits?

She's fine for now.

But won't she encounter an enemy whose attacks she can't dodge one day?

What's Shion-san going to do with her Endurance 1, Protection 1 then?

(I'll defeat them before they can eat her!)

That's my resolve.

This is the first time I've encountered the slime, so I give it my full power, with the chant.

“Split the heavens and become a ray of light, to strike my enemies——Thunder!”

The lightning directly hit the slime.

By the way, my attack magic doesn't affect party members, is what Shion-san taught me, so I don't have to particularly mind my allies' movements.

That makes things a lot easier.

"Woah..."

The slime just popped from my one attack.

And splattered all over the place.

Gross...

No drop item.

"Fuhh, so, the room with the ruins' guardian is right ahead. What's your level at the moment?"

Guardian? Does that clearly mean this place's boss fight is waiting?

Well, with Shion-san there, I'll be fine, probably.

"Ah? Level 9."

"Excellent. You'll probably level up to 10 from the guardian. Let's go, Alice."

"Onee-chan, you look like you're enjoying yourself..."

In the end, adventurers really do like adventure, don't they...

No no, me too, of course.

I hurried after Shion-san into the central room.

Adventurer

Under Shion-san's guidance, we arrived at the boss room, so to speak.

In front of the massive door, anxiety made my heart beat harder.

"As expected, this makes my heart race."

"You're flat, so I bet one can hear your heartbeat really well."

Eh?

Does having large breasts make it difficult to hear the heartbeat?

"... hm? You're not getting angry?"

"Eh? A-ahh! No, no, my breasts are still going to grow from now on!"

So this was a point to get angry, I see.

For me, large or small doesn't matter at all though.

And actually, my breasts won't grow anymore.

Because god decided so.

"... hey, why did you suddenly bring that up anyway?"

"Well, I thought you were nervous and wanted to calm you down."

"Please stop. That's old man humor, Onee-chan."

That must've hit her hard because Shion-san let her head hang.

E-eh?

Did I just discourage the frontliner before the boss fight?

"Old man..."

"Wai, you're too hung up over that, I'm sorry! I should've said it differently!"

"It's fine, I don't mind it..."

Then look at me!?

"Now now, let's go, Onee-chan! Let's kick some monster ass to feel better!"

I grabbed Shion-sans arm and pushed the door open.

"Old man..."

I'm begging you here!?

Shion-san!

The room's illumination from magic crystals was particularly strong for the ruin, like we had come out into daylight.

Inside the light room, I could see no enemy that might suddenly attack us.

I pulled Shion-san by the arm and completely entered the room for the moment.

Surveying the room, the roots spread all around caught my eyes.

And in the center of the room grew a splendid tree that almost reached the ceiling.

Did the roots grow from that tree?

While I was observing the tree, the door behind us suddenly slammed shut.

By itself.

"That surprised me..."

I thought someone was attacking us from behind.

I'd even turned around and taken a long, long look.

"It's coming."

Ah, she's back.

Shion-san got away from my hand and stepped forward, drew her sword and brandished it.

Eh, is something there?

"..... Hii!"

As I was looking at the room, suddenly an eye opened in the tree's trunk.

...now that was a surprise.

Level 14 Elder Tree

I've identified it!

"Don't get close! Alice!"

"Yes! Good luck!"

Shion-san ran towards the big tree.

As expected, it attacked with several of its roots acting like whips.

There are so many of them!

The slime's whips don't even compare!

Making the charging Shion-san its target, the big tree threw attacks at her from all directions.

Hey, isn't this bad after all!?

I was a bit worried, but then she dodged the tree's whips with dancing steps.

After gradually getting closer like that, once she was in range she attacked the tree with rapid strikes.

She chopped the wood, with her sword.

From the looks of it it's bone-hard labor.

Apparently Uncle came here with her when Shion-san was an Apprentice Swordsman.

Then, the two could switch up the frontline work, but now Shion-san is alone.

If she gets tired before this is over...

And Shion-san's Endurance is the same as mine!

Well, her level's different though.

But... Uncle's been dispatching monsters on request of the guild.

So he wasn't just a sloth.

I'm glad, he actually has a job.

(Isn't it about time now?)

Just when I thought that, my eyes met Shion-san's.

She nodded.

I finally activated my magic.

No, there's a reason why I didn't attack straight away.

In short, if Shion-san doesn't attack for a bit and build up aggro beforehand, the aggro will switch from her to me.

My magic is just that strong.

And once I have aggro, I can't deal with it.

Uhm, wasn't there a good term in relation to this?

——Leroy Jenkins![1]

I don't want people to call me that!

Oops, play time over.

“Split the heavens and become a ray of light, to strike my enemies———Thunder!”

The target's so big there's no way for me to miss.

Direct hit!

The tree's movements stopped for a moment.

But that's not enough to defeat it.

I noticed the tree begin to move once more.

All within predictions.

I steadied my breath.

10s cooldown.

With Shion-san here, there's no————

"ALICE! It's coming for you!"

"EHH!?"

I got aggro with just one attack!?

Like tentacles, the tree's whips closed in on me.

Some of them were still attacking Shion-san so it's not like I can't dodge them at all though.

"CRAAAP!"

I desperately dodged.

I looked well and hit the ones I couldn't dodge with the Lightning Rod.

I can shoot the next one soon——— I thought and got negligent.

"Wai! HYAAAA!!"

At some point, a tentacle had grabbed my ankle and suspended me midair.

Wait, wait!

From the belt down, my Leather Robe is like a skirt, so this posture is bad!

I reflexively pinned down my skirt.

"Is this the time to be embarrassed!? You're such a sheltered girl!"

Shion-san was shouting to me while showing off the divine display of both dodging the attacks against her and and warding off the whips that came to finish me off.

Nono, if anything I'm a man, you know!?

But what's with this embarrassment!?

All the while, the tentacle grabbing my leg creeped closer towards my body.

"Heyheyhey! Are you after me!? Are you after me!? You perverted tree!!"

I trash talked the monster.

Maybe it was my imagination, but I think I saw the tree's eye smile.

No... that was my imagination, right?

"Wa, really, give... ugh"

From my leg, the tentacle coiled its way to my belly and breasts.

Its only compassion was that it did it from above my clothes. But why does this peculiar pressure make me moan!?

"... ah, u"

"Woah.... that's so hot, Alice...."

Don't be impressed!

Ey, I'm not someone a monster like you can do with as you please!!

“Split the heavens and become a ray of light, to strike, AHH... my enemies! Thunder!!!”

I properly activated the magic and once more, it scored a direct hit on the perverted tree.

This time it seems the big tree couldn't bear it and withered, dissolved and disappeared.

"Wahhh!"

I fell from where it had held me midair...

"Oops."

... but Shion-san caught me in a princess carry.

...

Ahhh, I'm getting princess-carried~~.

"You're crying!?"

Shion-san looked a bit troubled.

"It's still pure..."

"No, no, I know that."

"My heart isn't tainted yet..."

"What!?"

Shion-san could only tilt her head in confusion at the mixed feelings assaulting my male heart.

I sulked for a while, but then we finally opened the door in the middle of the room and arrived at the Wellspring of Blessings.

"Woah, is this the place?"

"Yeah. Pretty, right?"

Like Shion-san had said, the water seemingly welling up from below shone deep blue, maybe due to the magic crystals around it, maybe by itself.

Does it taste like a Blue Hawaiian[2], too?

"Can I just drink it?"

"Of course."

I got Shion-san's okay, crouched down right there, scooped up water with both hands and drank it.

Okay, it's water.

But drinking it gave me this nice and warm feeling throughout.

Also, my body faintly glowed like when I'm activating magic.

Impressed, I watched it all, but before long the light disappeared.

"Have a look at your Status?"

Prompted by Shion-san, I checked my Status.

Name: Alice
Race: Halfelf
Gender: Female
Age: 15
Class: Mage
Level: 1

"Oh? ...o-oh?"

Mage... level 1!?

My level was reset?

"Well, I guess this is the starting line."

I see, putting it like this, I have thought I was catching up to Shion-san awfully quickly, considering I had only started adventuring the day before yesterday.

"But with this, you can also register at the guild."

"Right, the guild!"

Which reminds me, Aunty said I need to pay 1000 Rook, but not having an Apprentice Class was the other condition.

"If you register at the guild, you can take all kinds of requests, sell drop items and so on. It's the foundation of working as an adventurer."

"Adventurer, huh..."

"Although in all honesty, I don't want you to force yourself too much, it is dangerous after all."

Shion-san embarrassedly scratched her cheek.

"But for the moment..."

As always, Shion-san's friendly smile felt good.

She smiled at me with it and...

"Congratulations on becoming an adventurer, Alice!"

"... thanks!"

I strongly grasped the hand Shion-san held out to me.

Ilya

After returning to the town after noon, Shion-san and I split up.

Shion-san's adventurer comrades dragged her off saying they needed her on the frontline no matter what.

Shion-san seemed really reluctant to let me go, but after finally giving me the 1000 Rook to register at the guild, she was dragged to work.

"Right, Onee-chan doesn't belong to me. That's the problem..."

One day I'm going to leave this town and travel the world.

However, Shion-san has family here as well as her adventurer comrades.

Not to be conceited, but if I asked her, I think she would come with me.

But I only want to do that if there's no other way.

"Uhhm, guess for now I'll start by registering at the guild and saving up money."

At present, I'm receiving too much support.

I have to pay back all the favors I have received.

I'd asked about the general location before, so I made my way to this town's guild.

The town wasn't that big so I found it right away.

They had put a sign outside saying 'Guild, Rinnal Branch.'

As always, I can read and I can converse.

This conversion into Japanese is too useful.

Mulling over those thoughts, I crashed into someone.

Someone about to leave the guild.

"Ah! I'm sorry——ah."

I looked at the person I'd run into and was in for a surprise.

Mean-Look-In-The-Eyes!

"...it's alright."

I'm not going to get involved with this person.

That's what I thought, bowed my head once more and tried to go past him.

"Hey."

Don't talk to me!

I reluctantly stopped and turned around.

"... what is it?"

"Are you an elf?"

"I'm not."

"... I see."

Not because I'm a halfelf, but because my family told me not to reveal my race.

You should listen to people's warnings.

Only fools don't learn from failure.

The man said nothing else and tried to leave, but this time I remembered something.

"Ah, wait a moment!"

"What?"

The man turned around, annoyed.

Hey, why don't you show some more sociability?

"You, you're from the carriage yesterday, right?"

"Right."

Well, I wouldn't easily mistake a person that unsociable and dressed all in black anyway.

"The person on that carriage, uhm.... that is..."

"The slave."

While I was hesitating to say it, he easily did.

I see. So she really is a slave.

"Are you going to stay in town for a while?"

"For a week, I've heard. What about it?"

One week.

One week, to earn a fortune of 500.000 Rook.

Talk about unrealistic.

"That girl... was she bought by someone already?"

"No, not yet. We need to go to the capital to find a buyer. She's a prize."

Prize?

What's that about? Does he mean out here in the boonies nobody can pay the 500.000 Rook for her?

"What, do you want that?"

A slave.

A being that prioritizes their master over anything else.

I don't plan to be unreasonable in my demands, but they would always follow me, no matter where I go and what I do.

To be honest? That would be a great help.

"... I'm thinking about it a little."

"Do you have money?"

"Not enough to buy her."

There's no need to tell him I almost have nothing with foolish honesty.

The unsociable man went pensive for a while and kept his mouth shut.

"Oh, well. Just meet the real thing once then, to get into the mood to buy it."

"Eh!?"

"We're renting a room for it at the slavery firm down the street. If you're interested in buying after all, you can also have a look at other slaves."

The word slavery firm alone is suspicious already.

Will I really be alright if I go alone?

I'm not going to end up on the wrong side of the cage bars myself, am I?

"... I don't look it, but I'm a mage. You'd better be prepared for the consequences if you make a weird move."

"We're not that impolite to customers. Trust is important in business. Make light of it and the firm crumbles."

What he says makes sense, but what he does is still suspicious.

"Can I go home once and inform them where I'm going first?"

"Of course, I don't mind. I'm going to kill time in the guild for a while. Just come back when you're interested."

According to Shion-san, I'm worth 500.000 Rook.

Actually, I don't agree with slavery, but... I'm interested, in that girl.

Thus I went home once and informed Aunty.

It goes without saying that she was worried about me, but it seems the slavery firm, contrary to my thoughts, is doing an upright business.

That's what Aunty said.

They also shouldn't do something weird all of a sudden.

Just in case, I checked my own Status.

I got rid of the apprentice.

I need to know what changed.

I immediately noticed the Magic entry and the Skill entry.

Skill: selectable.
Attack Magic: Thunder (Proficiency 10)
Support Magic: Heal

It really has increased.

Because Support Magic has shown up among the entries, the entry that has been simply Magic so far was differentiated into Attack Magic.

Okay, let's first have a look at the Skill entry then.

Latent Potential, Double Cast, Cast Time Reduction

I see, so here is where I can finally use the special abilities I had set in the very beginning.

I can select one among them.

In that case, there's not even room for thought what to pick.

Cast Time Reduction

That's the only option.

Latent has an impressive name, but I don't have the slightest idea what it does.

I can pick that later.

I have an idea for Double Cast, but I feel it would be difficult for the current me to utilize.

I think I'll be able to use it better once I've grown a bit.

I selected the skill Cast Time Reduction.

Skill: Cast Time Reduction (special)

What's this special?

What makes it's so special from a regular Cast Time Reduction?

Time to verify that!

To begin with, let's check the Magic entry.

Thunder: no cast time, 10s cooldown (proficiency 10)

T-this is...

Cast time.... none!?

It was this strong!?

Even the 10s cast time so far haven't been that inconvenient?

At least while in a party.

Somehow, I get the feeling the road to being the strongest opening all of a sudden...

Support Magic: Heal: no cast time, 20s cooldown

I can't choose a support magic.

With a healing class, I probably would've had a selection.

But Heal, huh.

Isn't it wonderful to be able to heal myself now?

There's no cast time, either.

Well, the 20s cooldown looks like a heavy restriction.

If I use it along with attack magic, I'd probably collapse before the battle's even begun.

But that's it for the moment, I guess?

"But with this, I can resist enough if something does happen."

If I activate magic, there's no way to hide the light radiating from my body during the casting.

But they shouldn't expect eating a magic attack instantly.

They don't, right?

I'm not normal, right?

Completely prepared now, I met up with the man and went to the slavery firm.

The building is huge, it feels even more imposing than the guild.

They might be hauling in the money.

"By the way, what's your name?"

"... Solt."

I'm sorry, I can't bear the silence, so I talked to you.

But that's the only question that came to mind.

"..."

"..."

Maybe I should introduce myself in return?

Now, that's good manners, right?

Manners, precious.

"Uhm, I'm Alice."

"I see."

"..."

"..."

The conversaaatiooon!!!

Let's try to have a conversation here!!

You're trying to do business here, aren't you!?

If you can sell anything with that arrogant attitude of yours, the uncles and aunties from the shopping street are going to revolt!

"... Solt-san, you're pitch black, aren't you. The clothes, even."

"It is so that I can blend into the darkness, for work."

"... I, see."

What's with that answer? I'm scared to ask more.

What are you actually working as in the first place!?

"..."

"... isn't it dangerous to travel while showing off slaves, like yesterday?"

But I don't lose heart!

"Well, we get attacked by bandits a lot?"

So what?

That's hidden in his reply.

This blackie... just how strong is he?

"... right..."

When the awkwardness had reached its peak, I was led into a reception room and offered a seat on the sofa.

I quietly accepted.

Blackie did not sit down but withdrew into a backroom.

I was bored so I looked around the room.

There were paintings and vases, carpets were laid out; an awing room.

It really showed off that deals with a lot of money were made here.

"I'm sorry for the wait. Oh, what a lovely lady we have here."

The eye-patched man came from the backroom.

The atmosphere around him was somewhat different.

As indifferent as possible, I returned his greetings.

The eye-patched man sat down on the sofa facing mine.

"Let us prepare you a drink. Would black tea be alright?"

Crap, I haven't learned Squelch[1].

"No thank you. Let's get to the point."

"Very well. Solt told me you are looking for a slave?"

"Indeed. I am adventurer, I think a slave to accompany me would help me greatly."

"I see, a combat slave. An adventurer would certainly need one."

Need? Why is that?

It's a bad way to put it, but: Since you can just throw them away, it's good to let them do dangerous things?

"I'm a mage, so I would be grateful for someone I can leave the frontline to."

"Ohh? A mage, at your age?"

The eye-patched man narrowed his eyes, impressed.

Eh?

Shion-san wasn't that surprised, so I thought it was normal...?

"Excuse me, Miss, but... are an elf?"

"I'm not."

How many times does this make now?

What's so special about these elves?

"Hmm..."

The eye-patched man's other eye didn't look convinced, but he calmed his expression right away.

"I'm sorry for derailing the topic. Let me bring some of our firm's slaves that we can recommend to you, Miss."

"About that, today there is only a single slave I would like to see."

"Hoo?"

He was acting surprised, but I'm sure Blackie told him beforehand.

Sheesh, adults are cunning.

Disrupting the flow of the conversation for no clear reason.

Well, maybe I'm trying to speed it up too much.

"The one you brought on the carriage yesterday, show me that one."

"Ahaha, you have a discerning eye. Very well, please wait a moment."

The eye-patched man rang the little bell on the table and sent someone a signal.

Without a wait deserving that name, the door further in opened.

I'm sure everything's been long prepared.

"...excuse us, please."

Urged by Blackie, She entered the room.

She is about my height?

Seeing her up close, she really is beautiful.

Her face was almost too pretty.

Her shining, shoulder-length blond hair is floating around it.

Her green eyes are deep and clear like emeralds, but regrettably they're not shining.

She is overall lacking liveliness.

From her looks alone, I think she doesn't fall short of myself who borrowed the power of the god called character creation.

Don't tell me, did she get reborn, too, and lose?

Did she make a perfect character, just like me, and I would've shared this fate if I hadn't met Uncle?

"The Miss said she wants to see you. Greet her."

"...!?"

The girl who had not raised her eyes since the moment she entered the room listlessly looked up. The moment she saw me, surprise showed on her face.

"What are you doing."

"M-my apologies! Ilya is my name. Milady."

Her curtsy and greeting have elegance.

It is so natural, they couldn't have taught her in a day or two.

"Are you... going to buy me?"

I can see the hope in her eyes.

I understand the feeling.

I mean, if I were in her place, I'd also prefer this over some greasy old ass. A lot.

"I'm considering it."

Alright, what am I going to do.

Testing waters, waters testing

Alright, to begin with, I'd like to know her price.

Ignoring Her————Ilya's, it seems, imploring gaze, I erased my expressions.

I'm not going to be overcharged here.

Even if I don't have the money in the first place.

Buying everything at the price it's offered at is too Japanese.

This is another world.

Now then...

"I see. She certainly is pretty. But doesn't she seem a bit listless?"

"That's because not even a week has passed since we procured her. It must still be difficult for her to accept the reality of the situation."

That's really recent.

"However, she knows etiquette from before. She's not just some town girl."

Like that he nonchalantly raised her value.

"One week. Which means the people of your firm didn't have time to teach her anything... I understand you had no time to raise her value, correct?"

That I directly went and asked to see her was a mistake, but I'd like to keep the stance that I don't have to buy her no matter what.

At least superficially.

"Hmm, that's what it means."

He didn't even twitch.

Well, of course, no matter what a little girl like me says, he far surpasses me in experience.

"As an adventurer, I think it's better if I'm accompanied by a girl. However, if she can't fight, I'd be troubled, too. Would she have combat experience?"

Well, even if she doesn't, the demand from customers other than me should be high.

From men, you know?

"I see. Why don't you take a look at her Attributes then?"

Oh?

He seems really confident, from his reply.

Very well.

Let's have a look at those Attributes.

"May I?"

"Of course. Convincing the customer and making him happy is this firm's policy, Miss. Fraud is something only third-rates stoop to."

He's sure making a real job of it.

Signaled by the eye-patched man, Blackie guided Her to my side.

There, she showed her Status with Attributes only.

So they aren't showing me all at once.

Step by step, is it.

Strength 1, Endurance 3, Protection 5, Agility 1, Mind 0

"T-this is..."

This is too different from her appearance and impression!

"How is it? The one-sidedness isn't very praiseworthy, but I believe she completely fulfills your needs, Miss."

Ridiculous.

I unintentionally stared at her.

"It would be my pleasure, Milady."

She bashfully talking to me is actually indomitable, like a raspberry shaken in the wind.

The stalk is full of thorns, but the white petals bloom so very neatly and sweetly.

Other worlds, incredible.

The gap between appearance and ability is too big.

Where in that slender body of hers does she hide that sturdiness?

"... it seems so."

While reacting to Her reverence by lightly raising my hand, I thought.

If I have her, won't she become my shield even if Shion-san is not around?

Rather, speaking of becoming a shield, I can't think of anyone being more suited.

I want her.

No, now I really want her.

Seeing the real thing really does drive up your desire to buy it."But she doesn't have any combat experience, does she?"

I was persistently asking the eye-patched man, not the girl next to me.

I can't have them take me lightly.

"She doesn't."

Meaning she is a level one apprentice, huh.

"Her class?"

"Of course you can change it, but she is currently a Lancer."

Of course I can change it. Is that so?

"Do you want to confirm it?"

"No need. I trust you, Mister."

I composedly smiled.

I've become thick-skinned, too.

I can't manage it in front of Shion-san no matter what, but maybe I'm someone who can really put up a strong front?

(However, so far I haven't found a serious demerit. If anything, she's gathering points?)

...

Then it's time for a leading question, I think.

"I see. I've gotten a good grasp of her value."

She's completely unrefined, but there couldn't be a better raw gem.

That's how it is.

And——

"——This girl's not an elf, is she?"

The eye-patched man's mild smile deepened even further.

As if to say he liked the question.

"As expected, Miss. You are not swayed by outward appearance alone."

"Of course not."

Of course not my ass.

"Elven slaves are scarce. I want to obtain some even if I have to go to some length, but currently I don't have any."

I'm not an elf, okay?

Although I definitely won't show you my Status.

But... what do I do?

Do I push on, even if it's dangerous?

...

Alright.

"... If I said I have some connection to elves———— would that draw your interest?"

Not only Eyepatch, even the black-clothed man's atmosphere changed.

Crap, don't get violent, okay?

I still didn't eradicate my smile.

"I thought you weren't a just a sheltered, young lady, but this is a surprise."

The eye-patched man placed his elbows on the table and intertwined his fingers.

"Is that story true?"

"Let's say I cannot make definite promises."

"Of course not. It's elves we're talking about. Still, very intriguing."

Hmm.

Let's hope this doesn't cause any trouble between humans and elves.

"I thought you'd say so. But, let's keep today's conversation focused on this girl, shall we?"

At any rate, I'm suddenly down to only one card I can play.

Because I only have one trump card, right now.

Right, myself.

The suicidal act of revealing my Status.

"Hehe, you got me there, Miss. I underestimated you just a bit. It's been a while since I've had such an enjoyable negotiation. Including your fairness to the eyes, Miss."

"Why thank you."

I cast down my eyes and calmly smiled.

For some reason, I could hear the girl next to me make a little, admiring sound.

"Then, shall we release her Status? Including her race, that is."

"No, it's fine. Let's confirm that for when we make the final contract."

I softly rejected the eye-patched man's proposal.

Stop cornering me already.

I still have absolutely no concrete idea how to obtain her.

"Is that so. Let's stop beating around the bush then. This firm has set her price to be 500.000 Rook... is what I would like to say, but."

There the eye-patched man cut off his words and smiled at me.

"I'm dealing with you here, Miss. What do you think about specially making it 400.000 Rook?"

"I think that's a fair price."

So much!

"Today, since the beginning I came here only to look at her, but is she always here? Because I also heard she is a prize?"

I glanced at the black-clothed man.

I thought he was expressionless, so why does he stare at me with such a mean look in the eyes!

No, he's had that mean look in the eyes in the first place, so he's normal right now?

"We intended to use her as a prize for the combat tournament in the royal capital's coliseum. But well, we have replacements. If you buy her here, now, there's not much of a problem."

"I see, in the coliseum."

That also gets the adrenaline flowing.

But in that case———

"Then, if I participate and become the champion, I can also obtain her, correct?"

"Hahahahaha!"

The eye-patched man couldn't bear it any more and laughed out loudly while slapping his knees.

"Hah, apologies. You are absolutely right, Miss. Truly interesting, you are."

"Well, I can also see how selling her for more to the coliseum, making her a prize, is more advantageous for you, Mister."

Become a champion at the combat tournament or earn 400.000 Rook, just what is more realistic, huh.

Keeping my composed smile, I stood up.

"Hehe, either way, I won't think of it as a loss. If I can deal with a personage such as you, Miss."

The eye-patched man also stood up and signaled the black-clothed man to escort me out.

Blackie opened the door I'd come in through.

"It is business practice not to exchange names with first-time customers, but I would like to introduce myself regardless."The eye-patched man bowed with the elegance reminiscent of a butler.

"Bertrand is my name. It was a pleasure making your acquaintance, Miss."

"Alice. This was a valuable conversation. Let's talk again, Bertrand-sama."

I concisely answered, calmly bowed and headed towards the door.

In passing, I met Her eyes just once.

For some reason, she was blushing.

"... beautiful."

...let's pretend I didn't hear that.

"I'll make you mine. I've decided."

I whispered her just that.

After passing her, I felt a stare against my back.

"Y-yes! I'm looking forward to it, Lady Alice!"

Ahh.

I got through my grandstand play.

From here on out, I'm flying blind.

Probably nobody in this room knew these thoughts going through my head.

Other World Maid Cafe Revolution

"Wait!"

How should I get Ilya?

While mulling that and leaving the firm, I was suddenly called to a stop.

"... yes?"

When I turned around, Blackie was glaring at me with an amazing expression.

Nono, I'm not the killer of your parents, okay?

"Are you an elf?"

"... isn't it against the rules to try getting that information without compensation?"

"Are you going to tell me if I get you that woman?"

... excuse me?

I doubted my ears for a second.

After blinking 2.3 times, I tilted my head in confusion.

"What are elves to you then?"

"... I have a grudge against them."

I about-faced.

"Wait!"

Nono, for that reason alone I mustn't get involved with you.

"Get lost."

"If I don't have enough money, I'll enter than tournament and win her."

"As someone from the firm? Talk about fixed games. Don't tell me, that was the plan since the beginning?"

In that case the firm is shady after all.

"This is unrelated to the firm. Besides, I'm a mercenary. I'm just hired with money."

"I don't think this is a problem that's solved just because you don't belong to the firm, though..."

However, Blackie seems strong.

Maybe he can win and obtain Ilya for me.

... Still. In that case, I would sell myself out.

Uhhhm.

"I'm going to make my own move."

"I don't mind. I'm going to do what I want, too. Depending on the result, I'll get my reward."

Blackie come to an agreement by himself and returned into the firm.

"... Solt, was it?"

Just what in the world did the elves do to him.

Be that as it may.

First comes money.

Without money, I cannot pay back my favors.

Without money, I cannot buy Ilya.

Without money, I cannot get proper equipment.

Without money, I cannot go to the royal capital.

Thus, I wouldn't be able to obtain Ilya, either.

Therefore I finally went to my original target, the guild.

"Money, money, money..."

No matter where I go, the way of the world is tough.

"Ah? Oh, you are..."

When I entered the guild and went to the counter, a receptionist girl called out to me.

Hm?

Red, frizzy hair and freckles?

"Ahh, from that time?"

The face of that cheeky brat immediately came to mind.

"I'm really sorry for what my little brother did!"

No, if you bow with enough vigor to seem like you'll hit your head against the counter to apologize, it's a bit embarrassing for me, too.

Look, the others around us are watching curiously!

"No, no, please raise your had. It's not like anything happened back then. You're exaggerating."

"Thank you."

Oh?

Somehow her smile is very relaxing.

Like you can be yourself; like you don't have to be on guard...

"So you're working at the guild?"

"Yes. Ah, I'm Eleanor."

"I'm Alice."

"I know. My little brother was so annoying about it, sheesh. You're too beautiful, Alice-san. He wanted you to notice him, you know? He's such a rascal, but still a man, I guess."

To think I'd tempt such a stupid brat even...

Just what sin have I created?

No, that doesn't matter at all.

"By the way——"

"Ah! You have business at the guild, don't you? I'm sorry."

So quick to change gears～.

You can just let me finish talking, you know?

"Ehm, first I'd like to register as an adventurer at the guild."

"Got it! Then please fill out this form with your name, age, gender, class, and level."

"There's no need for the race?"

"If you wrote that, it might lead to discrimination. The guild however opens its gates to everyone."

I see, that helps.

Wait, if there would've been a problem with my race, Shion-san wouldn't have sent me here alone.

I entered the necessary information on me in the blanks.

It's a weird thing.

I think I write in Japanese, but it's being changed into Somethingish.

"Is this alright?"

"Thank you... ehm... a Mage!? Ah, no, I mean yes, it's alright."

She sure is lively...

"For validation, could you please show your Status to me? With the race hidden, of course."

"Suuure."

I operated the Status and showed it to Eleanor.

She sure is diligent, enthusiastically comparing it to the form. It's kinda cute.

"Yes, everything in order. Thank you very much!"

"No, the pleasure is mine."

For some reason I bowed my head.

I'm a Japanese through and through, aren't I.

"Now, since the paperwork is in order, may I please have the registration fee of 1000 Rook?"

"Of course."

I put the ten silver coins I'd received from Shion-san onto the counter.

"I've certainly received the money. With this you're an adventurer and can use all the guilds on the continent, Alice-san."

"Hee, right away?"

"Of course. The information we keep on you is transmitted and exchanged between guilds via magic crystals. When dealing a guild anywhere, you only have to display your Status and you will be recognized."

Heyhey, fantasy, what's this? The internet?

"Also, please take care that there's an update once a year. On that occasion, your registered information will be renewed and a renewal fee of 500 Rook becomes necessary."

"I see."

They're doing a fine business, these guilds.

There should be quite a number of adventurers. Don't they have quite the income with renewal fees alone?

"But Alice, so you are fifteen, huh... You're two years younger than me, yet already an adventurer. You're amazing!"

"Ehhm, well, it's a miracle I'm still alive though..."

"No need to be so humble!"

No, it's a fact.

"Now, it may be a bit sudden, but do you have some work for me?"

I'm fighting a battle against time here, aren't I.

"Hmm, let's see. The good jobs are all being done by other adventurers already, so... Ah!"

Eleanor stared at some documents for a while before she made a smile like she had thought of something good.

How curious.

I have very few memories where the something good that people making that face thought of was also something good for me.

"... is there something?"

"Yes, I've thought of an amazingly good job!"

Saying she thought of a job is weird no matter how you look at it, isn't it?

It is a guild job, right?

With my anxiety skyrocketing, I listened to Eleanor's proposal.

"Welcome back, Master! Mistress!"

On that evening, there was one special-of-the-day eatery where the tired office workers went to on their way home.

It's name was "Milky Way".

No, sorry, I was indulging escapism for a bit.

Putting it coolly doesn't help.

"Welcome back, Master! Mistress!"

I've repeated that mind-twisting standard line innumerable times now.

Every single time, the men entering the store stared at me.

Your stares are hurting me...

What the heck am I doing here?

To put it bluntly, I'm a maid in a maid cafe.

That should say it all.

I've taken other worlds lightly.

If there are slaves, then of course there are also more maids than in the real world——although that way of putting it is strange by now.

In that case, it's not strange for a store to tend to this kind of niche.

No, I've really taken other worlds lightly.

"Alice-san! A mixed juice for table 3!"

From Eleanore in the kitchen came another demonic order.

Right, this place is run by Eleanor's family.

I was employed as a part-time worker.

"... yes!"

With all my strength, I hid my despair under a smile.

... haha.

Stop kidding me!

Even if my heart is male, I'm still acting out a woman.

A maid?

Ahh, a maid, right.

I'll give you maid.

Anyone looking at me right now would think 'maid'.

The frilly, cute headdress decorating my hair.

The frilly, cute dress down to my knees with the apron on top.

My legs clad in knee-high socks, all perfect!

There's no reason I can't do this!

"I'm sorry for the wait, Master! Mistress!" I energetically called out in front of the table of an adventurer-looking group.

I'd carried the shaker with drinks to table 3 and held it up high in front of the customer.

I took a deep breath and made my whole face smile.

"Then, we're going to cast the spell. Do it with me, Mistress!"

I shook the readied shaker in my hands!

"Shakashaka♪"

"... shakashaka."

"Furifuri♪"

"... furifuri."

"Moemoe♪"

"... moe?"

"Kyunkyun♪"

"Kyunkyun."

"Become delicious! Moemoekyuuun♪"

I put in love and courage and hope with all my strength!

And then I put the perfected Mixed Juich! carefully down in front of the mistress.

That's when I first met the customer's eyes.

"H-hey. Good job, Alice."

"O..... nee... chan."

It was Shion.

"..."

"..."

"Nh."

"Nh?"

"NOOOOOOOOOOO!"

"Wai!? Alice!? You're inside the store now!?"

"Tell me earlier! You're horrible, Onee-channn!"

"Don't cry! Hey, you were really professional, Alice!"

That day, the Milky Way was turbulent until late into the night.

And I, I got my first pay in this other world.

500 Rook.

Earning money is really tough.

A girl

"I'll stop being a girl."

"... what?"

The day after the maid incident, I called Shion-san to my room and made that confession with a serious face.

I've had enough.

It's true that I thought it would be fun acting out a girl.

But still!

It doesn't mean I want to embarrass myself in front of people!

It doesn't mean I want to wear those frilly clothes and say master this, mistress that!

If anything, I'm in another world now, I want people to say that to me.

I need Ilya.

To keep my identity intact, I need Ilya.

I'm sure now.

And as expected, my confession made Shion-san look like she didn't know what hit her.

"Are you listening, Onee-chan?"

"Yeah, you regularly say some incomprehensible things..."

Exasperated, Shion-san threw herself onto my bed.

Nono, having a girl throw herself onto my bed, this is quite a situation.

However, since I'm acting a girl right now, it's also completely meaningless!

"Please listen, Onee-chan. Actually... I used to be a man!"

"..... haa. Oh, were you."

That reply leaves something to desire. But could you at least not sigh before it!

"Please try your best to imagine and listen!"

"I'm listening, I'm listening."

"I've told you that I'm a man."

"I'm. A. Man. Riiight."

"Uhhh..."

I've taken care to speak softly for so long now, I slowly became unable to stop!

"Th-that's right! So if you throw yourself onto my bed, I-I-I might attack you! That's how much of a man I am!"

"..."

Alright, I'll teach you how scary men are just a little bit!

... is what I tried bluffing with all I had, but Shion-san didn't react.

"... i-if you say nothing, I'll be really, really troubled."

"No, you see, I thought 'try attacking me then' and waited."

Shion-san rolled over onto her back and put her plentiful body on full display for me.

What are you rolling over for, Onee-chan!

And what's with your breasts!?

This is violence!

"... what's the matter, Alice? Not going to come?"

The way she gives me that feverish look, Shion-san is staggeringly sexy...

I reflexively swallowed.

I'm getting a little dazed here, I think.

No, this is bad.

Or is it?

Shouldn't I rather be happy that my reactions are still normal?

Ahh, my thoughts are in a mess...

"O-Onee-chan, if you say that, I can't help it. I-I'm not going to regret... this."

I got up from the chair I'd been sitting on and slowly approached the bed.

My heart is strangely loud.

My head is pounding.

Eh, what's this?

It also feels like a regular headache.

What, was I this tense?

"Alice... isn't your face too red?"

"N-not true. Onee-chan, that bluff is really weak!"

Crossing the room felt like walking along the Great Wall of China, but I finally reached the bed.

There, I grasped Shion's face with both hands.

Ahh, somehow Shion-san is really beautiful.

I've always thought of her as my reliable family. But seeing her like this, she's a beautiful woman after all.

Then the world turned.

Eh. Wait. What?

"Alice...? Hey, don't tell me!?"

Shion-san shifted her gaze to my abdomen.

"Stupid! Why aren't you keeping track?

"...keep track?"

Of what?

Is there something with my abdomen?

Come to think of it, there's this slight discomfort... !?

"Hii!?"

As I looked down, my face turned pale.

I was bleeding like never before.

"Wha? I... was I shot? A sniper? Eh? Am I going to die?"

So fantasy worlds have snipers too, after all!?

Furthermore, the lack of pain makes it all the more scary!?

"Don't be stupid. Come one, we're going to the toilet!"

Shion-san nimbly got up from the bed and dragged me away by the hand.

Hey, dragging shot people by the hand, that's too much!

In the first place, I have healing magic!

"Hey! You're dragging me too much!"

But Shion-san didn't hear any of it and just kept dragging me to the toilet.

Being taken to the toilet by a girl, can I still call myself a man...?

After accomplishing the mysterious bleeding, my clothes were changed and I was put to bed.

Shion-san was really gallant.

"... uhm... am I beyond hope?"

Is it a bad illness?

And I was just reborn...

"What are you saying... Be more careful, Alice. Really, you're playing stupid too much."

Nono, I don't think I am.

"Does it hurt?"

"Hm? Not in particular, no."

"Good. But your face is still red, so you're still not alright."

"Ah, do I have a fever?"

"Seems so."

Fever, huh.

I see, so that's why I was dizzy.

"... eh? I wonder if I did something to catch a fever..."

The only time I stayed up late was the night I went to the ruins.

Other than that, I shouldn't have unreasonably strained my body...?

"Hehe, Miss I'm-a-man Alice, do you have something to say?"

"Haa?"

Eh?

Why are you looking at me mischievously, Shion-san?

"Oh, well. I guess you said something weird because you're under the weather. Take it slowly, Alice."

"Eh? Ah, yes...."

What...?

Leaving behind those vague words, Shion-san turned to leave.

But before she disappeared, she turned around once.

"I'll come check up on you once in a while. Also, to commemorate today, I'll tell mom to make something delicious, okay?"

"Haa..."

Leaving behind a smile, Shion-san left the room.

"..."

...

.....?

Well, yeah, let's calm down.

I'm not an entirely ignorant brat, either.

I believe to know about things somewhat.

And based on that, the answer the events so far lead me to is...

"My period..."

As I said it out loud, my head felt lighter and lighter and I really passed out like that.

When I woke up, my physical condition seemed to have improved a lot and nothing felt strained.

The pillow was wet from tears though.

Thanks to that, my head was a bit painful.

I was a bit curious, so I went to the toilet once more and then changed clothes.

I was lent quite a lot of clothes, partially because Aunty is a Tailor.

I would've been fine with anything, but if I wore something strange, it would affect Aunty's reputation.

A Tailor also has a Tailor's pride, I guess.

Ahh... but I'm going to wash them myself...

"Ah, are you alri-woah!?"

Shion-san came while I was folding my clothes, but when I turned around, she was exaggeratedly surprised.

"... is something the matter?"

"Ah, no but... Alice, your eyes... are a bit scary?

Certainly, I feel a bit hollow myself right now.

I wonder though, what kind of eyes am I making?

"Hehe."

"W-what's the matter?"

"No, I just figured. Thinking about it, it's obvious. Of course god wouldn't take half measures when reincarnating me."

When I got up after putting my folded laundry into a basket, Shion-san drew back a few steps.

"Besides, I've started to wonder if that wasn't all a dream in the first place. Yeah."

The eighteen years in that world, I mean.

...

Like that could be the case!

I'm not growing senile here!

"I-I don't know what you're thinking, but if you're gonna be an adventurer, keep better track of your body, okay? Otherwise you'll be in deep."

"... I know."

I know that I know nothing.

I need someone who will support me.

Which leads me to Ilya again.

"Onee-chan, I think I'm going to save up money and go to the royal capital."

"The capital, huh. Certainly, I understand why you want to go."

"I also think about entering the combat tournament there."

"... I'm surprised you know about that. The combat tournament, huh. It's not even three weeks anymore, is it."

Then it'll be before my condition worsens again, right? I'd call that a good chance.

"Do you really know what you're getting into there? People die in that tournament. Of course I'm against it."

"Eh... people die there?"

Although it's a tournament?

I must've made a stupid face, because Shion-san laughed, as if she'd seen it coming.

"Nobody is blamed for accidents during the matches. Rather, it's the savage kind of tournament where the crowd is excited when people die."

Woah, looks like it would really be better to do something about the peace and safety permeating my thinking patterns, after all.

But still, saving up a fortune of 400.000 Rook is not realistic.

And yet I need Ilya.

No matter what anyone says, I need her.

"If it gets dangerous... I'll surrender."

"If you surrender, you'll have to offer the winner something of appropriate value. Currently, you have nothing, so if you're fighting a man... I don't have to speak further, do I?"

"That's low..."

"Hehe, I think a bit more self-awareness would suit you nicely."

Exasperated, Shion-san folded her arms and highlighted her breasts.

Yeah, self-awareness would suit you nicely, too, Onee-chan.

"... besides, you're not going to fight monsters. It'll be people."

"Yes... I thought as much."

I know what she wants to tell me.

Can someone spoiled like me really fight against people?

Thinking about it, I get no image at all.

I get the feeling that I can, but it might be impossible.

Could I shoot people with my magic?

"Alice, there's a good occasion. In three days, the guild here in Rinnal is doing a bandit hunt. Many of the skilled adventurers in the area are going to participate. I intend to, too, so, Alice——"

Shion-san stopped speaking once and gave me an emphasizing look.

"Are you going to come, too?"

A bandit hunt.

The other side will definitely consist of people.

And probably... the request will be dead or alive.

Of course, they will try to kill us without hesitation.

I will be faced with the killing intent of humans, not monsters.

"... let me participate, please."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes... it's dangerous, so I'd be worried about you otherwise, Onee-chan."

Like she was taken by surprise, Onee-chan suddenly had a baffled expression.

And then she blushed just a little bit.

"So cheeky.... Alice."

"Ehehe, probably, that's how little sisters are."

Also, it looks like I probably can't return to being a man...

This life in another world really gives me a lot to think about.

Bandit Group

The guild that found the bandit hideout decided to carry out the extermination operation three days later.

There were explanations from the guild and cooperation between the parties was set up.

That being said, under these hurried circumstances it's nothing terrific.

At most, it's one group storming the hideout from the east and another from the west.

Some parties are in charge of encircling the hideout and taking on the escaping bandits.

That's it.

All in all, there are sixteen parties participating in the bandit extermination.

On the other side, we still don't know the exact number of bandits, partially because we don't want our moves to be noticed.

From the size of the hideout, they are assumed to be around thirty.

If they escape it's meaningless, but that being said, if we're not enough people, they'll turn the tables on us.

——it's quite a dangerous quest.

Still, they do a lot of damage on the roads and in the forests connecting Rinnal to the nearby cities. If nothing is done about them, it will become a hindrance to the citizen's everyday life.

Merchants wouldn't want to take these roads.

Following that, the town would decline.

You could very well say this situation is graver than it looks.

If you go to the royal capital, there seems to be not just the guild, but a proper knight order, but they move too slowly to be relied upon.

If you put in a request and go through all the required paperwork, they will come "some time" apparently, but frankly that's not good enough for the people.

"Hey, Shion. You sure about letting Alice participate?"

Before heading out for the operation, while checking our equipment at home, Uncle spoke up.

Shion, having looked at her own sword, thrust it into her sheath while turning around toward Uncle and clearly nodding.

"This is what she decided. As an adventurer."

"I know, but still..."

Uncle's face was full of worry as he looked at me.

... well, it's not like I don't understand how he feels.

I mean, so far I've done nothing but cause worries for them.

"Nichol-san, I'm just going to do what I can, so..."

... I'm not going to force my limits——

——is what I really wanted to continue with but nobody knows what's going to happen in the actual battlefield. I shut up.

"Uhh...huh. If it gets dangerous, think about yourself first and run away, ok, Alice-chan?"

"I know."

That's a lie.

There's no way I can.

If it gets dangerous?

Our party obviously consists of Uncle, Shion-san, and myself.

Shion-san's group takes part somewhere else this time, so it's a party of family members only.

A situation where I, forming the backline of the party, is in danger... I don't even want to think about it.

"——alright, let's go."

I stiffly nodded at Shion-san's words.

Before leaving for the capital, I want to give something back to these people, if only just a little.

I can attack at range. I'm sure I can be of use in a party with Shion-san and Uncle who both use swords.

For the sake of the people in this town, too, I will strike the bandits.

I don't have to think about the opponents.

I can do that later just fine.

Seen off by Aunty, we began the operation————

The bandits' hideout is on the other side of town, opposite from the forest with the ruins. After leaving town, we advanced while staying clear of the road.

On the appointed day, we left early in the morning, but some parties had already headed out the evening before.

The groups left town at so different times from each other to get into position.

Whether it helps or not, the goal is to trick the bandits at least a little bit.

Because we're not many people, our party's goal is to take part in surrounding the hideout and take on the escaping bandits.

However, there's a good likelihood to run into a lookout or some bandits happening to be outside, so it cannot be called safe.

"We're almost there," Shion-san said while spreading a marked map and checking the surroundings.

Next to the river flowing continuing on to Rinnal, just outside the forest.

The operation begins when the sun has reached its peak.

With watches, it would be noon exactly.

And that time is soon.

"... I hope the people assaulting the hideout directly are fine."

"There's six groups of six veterans each. But we can only pray."

"Yes..."

As expected, Shion-san was just as tense as myself.

Her eyes were attentively scouting our surroundings.

And Uncle, too, was leaning against a rock sized just right to sit upon, his eyes closed.

He might be listening for something.

As for myself, I couldn't rid myself of that bad feeling of foreboding assaulting me.

Our current mission was to wait, but I was restless if there wasn't something we should do.

I was restless in the truest sense of the word.

It wasn't the atmosphere to talk to Shion-san or Uncle, so for the moment I decided to calm down by changing the water in the canteen.

I went over to the river and submerged the canteen into it after dumping the old water.

By the way, the canteen is of course no bottle.

It's a leather bag.

"Hmm...?"

While submerging the water bottle in the river, I inadvertently looked to the other bank, and noticed something unnatural about the shade of a rock; something was off.

The river was around ten meters wide, but I could see a big rock on the other side shine weirdly.

Was it some reflection?

No, these light particles...!?

"MAGIC!!"

I at once shouted to the others.

Too late!

"Freezing breath, change to dancing blades——— Blizzard!!"

The man jumping out from behind the rock was singing his incantation.

The magic ice projectiles forming indeed turned into blades and poured towards us.

His target was————all of us!?

There is area of effect magic!?

From above our heads, icen blades rushed down like hail.

That's not something you can dodge.

"————"

To at least protect my head, I crossed my arms before my face.

Then I got skewered—— is the worst case I expected, but the shock I received was not that much of a worst case.

It was more along the lines of being hit my normal hail pebbles.

Of course, it still hurt.

But that was it.

At most, it might leave some bruises?

Why?

But looking at myself, I'm surrounded by something like a thin film of light.

Before the ice projectiles hit me, they hit the film of light and lose their power.

"So magic defense—— comes from Mind!"

Which means that the least injured in this place is me with my Mind 5.

On the other hand——

"Onee-chan!! Nicholl-san!!"

Especially Shion-san, she has Mind 0!

The moment the ice projectiles finally stopped, I turned around in horror.

"I'm fine!"

Without a single scratch on her body, Shion-san drew her sword.

Eh?

Not a scratch?

"Eh?"

No away.

She dodged... all of them!!?

"Are you a monster!?"

"Why are you insulting me here? ... Pops, you alright?"

While glaring towards the opposite shore, Shion-san called out to Uncle.

"Yeah, this is nothing."

Uncle slowly got up with his shield.

——but.

"——your leg!"

An ice blade was sticking in his leg!

Uncle was laughing that it was nothing, but he wouldn't be able to move like that.

Heal!

No, wait, the enemy on the other side of the river came first?

Without time to ponder, the situation evolved.

A group of people, probably bandits, came out of the forest.

Five people from the forest, a total of six with the man on the other side of the river!

"Tsk!"

They were a much more immediate danger than the man on the other side of the river.

Shion-san was rushing towards the bandit group.

Three of them had swords.

Two spears.

One mage on the other shore.

They had thought this through!

Thinking about cast time and cooldown as well as attack range, this was the optimal setup.

Supposing we didn't have anyone capable of ranged attacks, it would be onesided.

"..."

"...I know!"

Before attacking the enemy, Shion-san gave me one look.

I clearly nodded at the signal in that look.

Shion-san made a small smile in return.

When I looked back to the other shore, the mage had just finished his cooldown and began casting anew.

Like I'd let you!

"You're slow! Split the heavens and become a ray of light, to strike my enemies——— Thunder!!!"

I instantly fired my magic.

One serious strike with chanting the incantation at that.

Seeing me invoke magic without any sign of generating mana beforehand, the mage on the other side of the river made a shocked face—— and fell, without any chance to dodge.

That probably meant I completely surpassed his magic defense.

The film of light made no change whatsoever.

The result gave made me shudder for a second—— but.

That could come later!

Stopping my thoughts, I rushed to Uncle's side.

"The wound... oh my god!"

Uncle was drenched in cold sweat and the blade of ice was still stuck in his left thigh.

This went beyond painful!

Even the blood flowing out was on the verge of freezing, this might lead to frostbite.

"H-hey, you're amazing, Alice-chan. Nice skills!"

Come on come one!

"That doesn't matter in the least!"

What should I do?

Even if I use heal, I think I should pull the ice blade out beforehand.

But won't he bleed out then?

But either way, like this he'll get frostbite.

"Give me that, please!"

I borrowed Uncle's swords and cut off a piece from my robe's skirt.

That made it a lot shorter, but that *really* didn't matter now.

I could use that in place of a tourniquet.

I tied it at the left leg's base with all my strength.

"Ghhh... I'm! Too weak...!"

Is this going to be enough?

If it's not really tight, it's pointless!

"I just need to tie this, right?"

Uncle laughed at me with his dandy face and tied the tourniquet once more himself.

"Y-yes! It's only for a short while, but make it as tight as you can!"

"Sure thing! Nnnngg!"

With his face contorting in pain, Uncle tightened the tourniquet.

The rest...!

"Sorry, please bear this!"

I grabbed the blade of ice and pulled it out in one go.

"Guaaahhhhhh!!"

For that Uncle to cry like that, it must hurt a lot.

It makes me feel sorry.

But there's no point if I fail after all this.

After drawing out the ice blade and discarding it, I took a breath and willed the activation of another magic.

"Goddess of earth, grant compassion with your healing breath——Heal!!"

When I held my hands near the wound and chanted the magic, pale, white light enveloped it.

The wound which had had blood trickling out of it gradually closed.

However, the wound was deep.

Not something healing right away.

And you can keep the magic Heal active over time——I understood that right then.

You can probably decide to, depending on the wound.

However—— I felt how incredibly exhausting it was.

The mana inside my body was rapidly flowing out.

Now just that, my stamina was taken as well——or maybe I gave it to him?

Anyway, I quickly got dizzy.

"Ngg."

Should I cancel it once and cast it once more?

No, Shion-san is still fighting, don't be so weak!

Show some spirit!

But I'm really collapsing now——on the verge of that, I somehow completely closed the wound.

"Haaaah... how is it? Do you think the leg will be alright?"

"... amazing."

Uncle was touching the area the wound had been like he couldn't believe it.

"Looks like you're alright... thank god. Ah, please take off the tourniquet."

Uncle took it off and carefully got up.

Then raised his left leg a bit and stepped down.

"Hmm... it's a bit uncomfortable, so it's not completely recovered, but it's good enough."

Well, I'd be scared if it was already completely healed.

As relief overcame me, I noticed for the first time that I was too tired to even get up.

And like that, I went plop.

I let myself fall backward spreadeagled, as they call it.

"...nice viewyouch!!"

Shion-san knuckled Uncle over the head.

"I've got one amazing little sister, don't I, Pops?"

"Wawa"

After setting Uncle straight, Shion-san proceeded and tousled my hair, no holds barred.

"... if you put it like that, that should make her my daughter, too."

"You don't look at her like a daughter, stupid pops."

"Y-you're wrong!"

"N-nono! More importantly, the bandits?"

Stopping those two as they turned towards a weird topic, looked towards the forest.

"Eh? That is...?"

In the direction Shion-san was pointing were five falled bodies.

"……are you a monster?"

I'm never going against Onee-chan.

I secretly swore that to myself.

Living Legend

"For an ambush, they were way too prepared."

Next to the pondering Shion-san, I borrowed Uncle's cloak and wrapped it around my waist as a makeshift pareo to compensate for the shortened skirt.

"Didn't some of the guys who departed last night just get themselves captured and questioned?" Uncle suggested, but Shion-san was not convinced. Or so said her face.

Still, don't say such scary things so easily, Uncle.

"Doesn't feel right, but... I'm just surprised that this run-off-the-mill bandit group had a Mage."

Shion-san looked at the bandit collapsed on the other side of the river.

She tried getting a reaction out of him, but he didn't even twitch.

It's probably too real to be playing dead.

When he fell, his face ended up under water to begin with.

That nailed it.

"..."

Shion-san turned toward the bandits she defeated.

There's... no way she used the back of her sword, is there.

The traces of blood are obvious to see.

It's just... I'm calmer than I thought I would be.

Although I don't want to see them up close.

Still, I wonder if my feelings are just numbed for the moment.

"At any rate, it's fishy. What do you think, Shion? Go back to the relay point and report? Or should we wait a bit and see?"

It's obvious how much Uncle trusts Shion-san.

Well, so do I.

The bandits' hideout is a cave in a little cliff a bit into the forest.

But the forest is dense, and as it's away from the road, it's no place you'd just get close to.

Being just outside the forest as we are, we have no idea of the situation of the assault parties.

If we wait here, the escaping bandits will come to us. Maybe.

Or they might not.

"Well, the operation should've just begun, so waiting and seeing is probably the correct decision, but..."

While thinking, Shion let her eyes cautiously roam over the forest and the opposite shore.

Earlier I happened to find the enemy first, but fundamentally Shion-san never let her guard down.

"...when things smell fishy——"

"Trust your gut. Man, I've raised such a tomboy."

Uncle smiled wolfishly.

"Yeah, yeah, I am your daughter, Pops."

"True, that."

As the two reached an agreement, their eyes gathered on me.

"We are now going to check out the hideout. Alice, you go home."

I'd thought they were going to say that.

"Don't you think it's more dangerous to return alone?"

"No, I don't think it's more dangerous than getting closer to the hideout."

"How about returning together once? Nicholl-san isn't at his best."

"You've got me there."

Uncle grinned embarrassed and scratched his cheek.

"But, Alice-chan. We can't miss this chance at the bandit group."

The town itself might go on decline.

You can't just ignore that.

This request isn't fun and games.

I felt like I'd been hit by cold water.

"..."

"Hehe, don't make those eyes, Alice. You've done more than enough already."

I know myself that my displeasure is showing on my face.

Or rather, I'm worried about the two.

"Please, Alice-chan. Reporting that the situation is fishy is a fine job, too, you know?"

"...okay."

It's no good.

No matter what tantrum I throw, I can't convince those two.

"Alright, just as you said, we've got no idea what might happen on your way back. You realize that letting you go alone in spite of that is because we trust you that much?"

"You're unfair, putting it like that..."

I laughed, and Shion petted my head.

"You two be really careful, okay?"

"I know."

"Gotcha. Can't keep showing you just my uncool sides, can I, Alice-chan."

I never particularly thought of Uncle as uncool, though.

"See you later, then"

"Yeah."

"Gotcha."

After seeing the two off, I once more looked towards the bandits' corpses.

Looking at them on my own, they are scarier than before after all.

I forced my feelings in a different direction, turned my back towards the forest and started walking.

When I arrived at the relay point, I thought bingo.

The relay point was a simplistic hut built for travelers on the road to rest in.

I call it a hut, but everything's completely visible from the outside. Four wooden pillars holding a roof over a group of logs for chairs, that's all.

It's kinda of reminiscent of the open pavilions you can find in some parks.

What was strange is that the guild employee who was supposed to be on standby there was absent.

Looking around, there was nobody nearby either.

For the set relay point to be vacant is extremely unnatural considering the importance of this plan.

I checked the map I'd been given again, but I probably was in the right place.

I properly followed the landmarks according to the map and came here.

Following the road from here, the town wouldn't be that far away.

Thinking wouldn't change anything, so I could only go on all the way there and report directly in the guild.

"——Oy, little girl."

"———!"

For a second I thought my heart would stop.

Turning around, and I really have no idea when she came, there stood a girl even smaller than myself.

I reflexively readied my rod, but as if to show she wouldn't do anything, the girl showed me her empty hands.

"W-hat is it? How did you..."

"... thou better refrain from returning to that city now. Thou will die."

"... haa?"

"Timing when your warriors left earlier, a group of ruffians made for the city in return."

"Wh——at, are you saying..."

I reflexively looked in the direction of the town.

"That... smoke!?"

I was still a distance away so I couldn't be sure.

But... that was...!

"There was that sagacious darkelf... although she is a disgrace."

At that moment, I noticed the girl's special features for the first time.

Blond hair gathered in two pigtails.

Peeking out from that, pointed ears.

And eyes blue as the clear sky, no, more like the deep, blue sea.

"You... no way, an elf!?"

"Slow, aren't thou. Although one has no memories when one appeared in human habitation the last time."

Contrary to the girl's lovely appearance, there was nothing childish about the way she spoke.

"But time presses. One has to deal with the village's shame."

"You're trying to save the town?"

"Make no mistake. One is acting upon one's own issues. The human habitation is of no concern. ...but it might be saved along the way."

"... are you strong?"

Strong enough to take on a bandit group on your own?

"Hehe, for a little girl like thee to ask, time must have passed."

Time? What are you saying, you look younger than me.

But still, as an elf...

"One is Tillbell Aynshaura. They used to call me the Witch of Ice and Snow, once upon a time."

Puffing out the chest she clearly had less of than me, the girl answered my question.

But...

"Never heard of it."

"... this is why the young ones these days are."

Maybe I had hurt her feelings, but the girl suddenly started towards the city without minding me any longer.

"Wait, please!"

"... what? One said time is of the——whaa!?"

I grabbed the elf girl's hand and started running.

"That's why it's not the time to be walking!"

"But thou were holding one up!"

"Don't mind the small stuff!"

"And thou are completely ignoring one's warning!"

"There are times when one can't listen!"

Shion-san and Uncle are out.

The guild members are headed for the hideout.

I have no idea where they passed each other, but at the moment, the town is defenseless.

There is a militia, but it isn't that big.

It's just some rural town after all.

Who would protect Auntie?

Who would protect Eleanor-san and the others?

And Ilya?

"... hey, little girl. What is thy name?"

"Alice!"

"... this mana..."

The girl was staring at me with her blue eyes.

"Interesting. Alice! I especially allow thee to accompany one. Call one Till."

For some reason, the girl was happily laughing.

"Well thank you. But you——Till, you're really strong, aren't you?"

If she is just a young girl of the age she looks like and acting old, I'm committing complicity in murder here.

"Well, strong enough to not futilely waste stamina like thee."

Speaking of which, I had thought the little girl was keeping up well considering I was dragging her along.

"You're running... on top of the air!?"

The girl's feet didn't touch the ground.

And every step of this girl running through the air was long, like she was jumping. She was easily keeping up with me.

No, rather it was on a level where she was matching her pace to me.

"One cannot fly through the sky, but if it's temporarily running..."

Whenever she landed in mid-air, there was something like a wave of cold.

They say colder air is heavier, so it falls.

So by smashing the cold air towards the ground, she created a repellant force to use.... is that the explanation?

Either way, she was clearly exceptional.

"... I'll not think about it too deeply. If you're strong, that's good enough for me!"

"Yes, hurry. Before it is too late for both on both ends."

...both ends?

While running, I reflexively looked in the direction of the bandit hideout.

"...be safe!"

I can only believe.

I only have one body after all.

I strongly gripped the girl's——Till's hand and ran even faster.

Snow dancing in the Flames of War

My throat hurts.

Breathing is painful.

I don't have enough oxygen.

And if that wasn't enough, because of that I'm probably wasting breath to boot.

Feels like hyperventilation.

When doing strenuous activity for a long time, there comes a point where how you *breathe out* becomes important.

And currently I don't have the specs to run long distance to begin with.

It's pointless if I can't fight when I reach the city.

On the other hand——if I'm too late, it's pointless too.

So I desperately ran towards the town, going up in a blaze of fire.

"Hah, ha, ha..."

After reaching the gates, I stopped, supporting myself on my knees.

I was very well aware suddenly stopping like that is not good for myself, but I abided my screaming body which didn't want to move another step.

Crisis or not, I was at my limit.

"... no matter how much time passes, no matter where one goes, it ends up like this," Till muttered lonelily and let go of my hand.

"Wheeze, wheeze... Till?"

I felt like dying already, but Till only looked at me like some insect.

Stop it!

You're crushing my heart!

"Weakling. Come after taking a breaking. After this is over, I will drill thee until thou wish thou were dead."

"Wait..."

I tried to call her to a stop, but Till only laid a finger on my mouth.

"One is not so weak to be worried about by one's disciple. Even if one retired long ago. Rest a bit before thou come. Is that well?"

With those words, Till ran through the air into town.

"Ha, ha... disciple?"

No, more importantly this endurance...

In an emergency, I cannot do anything with it!

Heal... would be pointless, wouldn't it.

Oh well, I can only remain here until I've caught enough breath to be able to walk again.

DAMMIT!

Weakweakweakweakweak!!

What's with this weakness, I'm not the world's strongest at all!

I allocated my Attributes and Skills as I saw fit, but putting that to use, or not, depends on me now.

But this body's unreliability pisses me off!

"O... kay... I'm fine..."

While breathing with heaving shoulders, I put one foot before the other.

I have to, protect Aunty.

In place of, Shion-san and Uncle————————

I'd known.

For a while even.

But after entering the town, that imagination changed into certainty.

The blood and the screams, the smell of burning buildings and "somethings" brought be to the edge of puking.

Robbing, killing, burning.

This...

Is this something people are doing!!?

"Aunty..."

Cutting across the main street, I hurried home.

So far, I hadn't run into a bandit since entering the city.

There were some ice-encased corpses looking like bandits lying around, but it went without thinking who was behind those.

Anyway, home!

Whipping my screaming body forward, I hurried home.

Like that, I finally arrived.

It wasn't burning... but the door was open!

The anxiety almost crushed me.

My reasoning came up with all the bad scenarios.

I basically jumped inside——————

"——————————Aunty...?"

There were two people.

In the living room where I'd always laughed with Shion-san, Uncle and Aunty, in the living room where we'd bantered, there were two people.

One was a bandit in boorish clothes with a blood-stained... those round swords, a scimitar?

Anyway, he had a blood-stained weapon in his hand.

And the other————a figure lying on the floor that I knew well.

"Y..."

The world turned red before my eyes.

"What!? Amazing! There was such a beauty left!? Lucky!"

Seeing me, the bandit was delighted.

Disgusting!

"————You're dead!! You animaaal!!"

"Argh...!?"

With a single thought, I released magic against the bandit defenselessly coming towards me.

Without restraint, without regret, without mercy, only with clear intent to kill.

Even without the incantation, the effect is enough.

With one strike, I sent him to hell.

I didn't feel anything about it.

I wordlessly walked towards the fallen bandit———and stepped on his head.

What should I do?

What should I do!?

I haven't had enough.

I haven't killed enough!!

I want to tear him to shreds!!

"..."

My eyes fell onto the scimitar in the bandit's hands.

"...I'll cut you to pieces."

I grabbed the blood-stained scimitar and———

"...D... don't... do it. Alice... chan."

"!?"

I dropped it.

Who gives a damn about murder weapons.

With all my power, I turned around.

"Don't get... swallowed up."

"Aunty!"

Even with blood flowing out of her chest, Aunty smiled at me with her never-changing warmth.

She's alive!

She was still alive!

"Run away... Alice... chan... cough."

Aunty had been stabbed in the chest.

Her heart... was probably alright, but it was in that area.

No, if her lungs overflowed with blood...!

"I won't run! I'll save you! As long as you're alive!"

Focus.

This time, it's okay if you collapse.

"————Goddess of earth, grant compassion with your healing breath!!!"

I poured the miracle of healing into the stabbed chest.

One moment later, dizziness assaulted me.

The wound was too deep.

Uncles had been nothing in comparison.

I felt my mana and my stamina being drained to the bone.

Probably, Heal is lower class magic when it came to healing.

Mages don't specialize in healing, I can't help it.

That's right, I can't help it.

I can't help it.

But with "I can't help it" is not enough for Aunty's life!

"I'll definitely!"

They are the saviors that took me in, cared for me, made me family, without knowing a thing about me.

Uncle, Aunty, Shion-san.

Without this family, I'd definitely be dead by now.

Like I'd let some bandits do something to them!

"Oh? What's this? There were some women after all!"

"Seriously?"

"——"

Two new bandits came through the entrance.

This was the worst.

Cancel————yeah, like I can do that!

I'm fighting for every second here!

I have no time to spare to attacking!

"Please leave! Right now... I don't have the time to... deal with you!"

I was about to fall unconscious to begin with.

To remain conscious, I strongly bit my lip.

It hurt too much.

That taste of blood and the pain somehow bound me to reality.

"Hehe, now this is a good woman!"

"Hya, don't stay there, play with us!"

With vulgar laughs, they came closer.

What should I do!

I really don't have time to deal with you now!

...

"I'll take you on later, so please, leave us alone right now!"

I wanna die, really!

I should've learned Double Cast!

No, just how much has Cast Time Reduction saved me already?

And before that, right now I'm having my hands full with heal, there's no way I have room for Double Cast!

"Can't have that, missy——you're a Mage, right? That makes now our chance, doesn't it."

Dammit!

Damn those bandits, I'm out of options!

The bandits came closer and closer.

But of course, I had no intention of escaping.

I didn't.

Ahh... so these guys are going to make me their plaything

Such brutes are going to make me their plaything.

I can't even cry anymore...

One of the men's hands reached for me————and was run through by a spear.

"——eh?"

"GYAHHH"

Screaming out pathetically, the bandit rolled over the floor."

"What the!?"

In a panic, the other turned towards the entrance from where the spear had come flying.

I'd also confirmed.

The person who had thrown the spear from entrance.

"——Please refrain from touching Alice-sama."

Blond hair, green eyes.

That courteous manner of speech.

Those features you never forgot once you've seen them just once.

"Ilya!"

Why is she here?

No, now isn't the time to ask why, is there?

"I am late, Alice-sama. Here I come!"

No, Ilya hasn't fought before, has she!?

"You bitch! I'll hurt you for what you did!"

The unwounded bandit drew his scimitar and rushed at the unarmed Ilya.

I was in a predicament myself, but seeing others in trouble is bad for my heart!

When the bandit charging at her swung down his scimitar, Ilya glided forward, grabbed his arm and used his momentum to throw him.

———Aikido!?

"Urg!?"

The man moaned as he smashed into the floor.

Ilya had Agility 1.

But her movements——okay, they hadn't been that fast.

In the end, she had matched his timing and naturally slipped inside his reach.

Amazing Ilya!

"——I'll kill you, bitch!"

The bandit who had taken Ilya's spear to the hand went into a frenzy and slashed at her.

Ilya was still off-balance.

"Watch o-"

The scimitar cut into her.

That's what I thought.

I, and the bandit, too.

"... Haa?"

The bandit was surprised, and my mouth didn't close, either.

Ilya——

"Too light."

She had stopped the scimitar with one arm.

With her slender arm.

Had I done that, the arm would've been off.

For certain.

While we were dumbfounded, Ilya glided forward and switched places with the bandit. Now in front of me, she picked up the dropped spear and skewered the bandit with it.

"Grgrl"

"Hiii!"

Seeing that, the thrown bandit ran for the door to escape, but that's where his life ended, too.

"What an eyesore," said the man with a look in his eyes so mean you'd take him for a bandit. Blackie.

"Solt... san?"

With the daggers in both his hands, Blackie had cut down the bandit in an instant.

"Why are...?"

"Hah, I'd have a problem if you died on me."

Blackie didn't meet my eyes and looked away.

"Thank you... very much."

Is he a tsundere?

Nono, even if he is, does that mean I have to do something?

I don't want any men!

But I'm still thankful!

Really.

But now————!

"Please, be safe!"

While thanking Ilya and Blackie, I focused on healing.

I wonder how long I've been at it now.

Mana and stamina have crossed the limit already.

It feels like the lacking mana is compensated for through stamina.

I'm on the verge of blacking out.

Whittling away my life, I'm saving Aunty's.

Without exaggerating, that's how it is.

"————cough, Alice... chan"

"Aunty"

She made it!

Aunty still seemed far from her best, but compared to before, her smile was far more relaxed.

"Alice-chan, you're... so amazing..."

"Aunty!?"

"She is alright, Alice-sama. I believe she just fell asleep."

On Ilya's prompt, I checked Aunty's condition.

Certainly, her expression was calm and her chest rising and falling.

She was breathing!

"I... saved her...?"

On the other hand, I was in blank amazement.

"Yes. As expected, Alice-sama!"

"I saved her..."

"Alice-sama's devotion and loveliness were very radiant to me."

However, they say people who don't treasure themselves cannot save others.

"Eh...?"

Strength left my body.

Not listening to my will any longer, my body crumbled to the floor.

I couldn't even speak anymore.

My consciousness became vague.

Did I... push myself too much...?

"Alice-sama! Oh no, you exhausted yourself too much!

Ilya embraced me.

I still couldn't move.

Ahh, too late, my consciousness————

"————Please excuse me, Alice-sama. You can scold me for this later!"

With those words, Ilya bent over me.

.....

"Eh————h!?"

Alice and Ilya, by NinetH

Ilya kissed me.

Only that fact filled my mind.

"Nn..."

Ilya's beautiful face was flushed.

My thoughts couldn't catch up, so I let her do as she pleased.

Just, I felt something hot flow from Ilya's mouth into me and fill me throughout.

Energy welled up.

From the verge of unconsciousness I thought I almost wouldn't wake up from anymore, my consciousness stabilized, too.

As my consciousness stabilized, I couldn't help but wonder and wonder about the feeling of Ilya's lips.

Kisses... did they really feel this good...?

"Ha-a... once more, please excuse my behavior. Alice-sama."

"Ah..."

For a moment, I thought it was too bad that Ilya had stopped kissing me and apologized.

"... oy."

"!?"

Blackie's voice made me come to my senses.

My body was moving.

I pushed Ilya aside and stood up.

"H-how is the situation outside!? We have to hurry and beat those bandits!"

"Just have a look."

Blackie urged me to, so I quickly left the housed

For the moment, Ilya and Aunty were left inside.

"This is...?"

When I came outside, everything had turned into a winter landscape.

The burning buildings had all been extinguished.

An impossible amount of sudden snow.

But it was gentle snow.

It stifled the fires and gently wrapped up the town.

It was doubtlessly snow, but touching the flakes falling from the sky, they were so very warm.

"Amazing..."

I instinctively recognized it as magic.

In the time I saved one person, Till had saved the whole town.

What a contrarian of a elf.

What amazing magic.

While watching the snow dancing in the air, I only had one thought.

One day.

Phantasmal Roar

We carried Aunty to bed and took a rest for a moment.

I couldn't carry her alone and show off, so I had Ilya help me.

I'd already checked her breathing before, but I did it once more to make sure.

"Hm... she's alright, isn't she," I murmured, as if to reassure myself.

"I believe she will be alright. That was a wonderful spell, Alice-sama."

"T-thank you."

Ilya sure acts normally—

Should I think of that as something like artificial respiration?

No, I'm sure it was something along those lines, but still.

What on earth has she...?

"Ilya, earlier... what exactly was that?"

"I am very sorry, Alice-sama."

"No, it's not like I'm angry, how should I say this, I feel like thanks to that I was able to get better?"

Oh Ilya, you're not even my slave yet but you're so polite to me already.

"That is, uhm..."

While avoiding me with her emerald eyes, Ilya hesitated.

I see, so she can't reveal her circumstances just like that, either. Just like me.

"Sorry, forget it. But you really did save me there. Thank you."

From the point she saved me from the bandits, actually.

Actually, Ilya is damn strong!

Isn't she stronger than me?

Well, I won't lose at ranged combat though!

"No, such praise is wasted on me."

"You're so stiff..."

Well, if I do manage to buy Ilya, our time together would increase and we'd could get closer or used to each other, I guess.

"By the way, how did you know where I was?"

"While I was fighting alongside the Firm's combat slaves, I spotted you running through the streets right away, Alice-sama... because you stand out."

Finding it somewhat hard to say, Ilya turned her face away.

...wait a sec.

"... did the bandits coming after me perhaps follow me?"

Ilya awkwardly nodded in affirmative.

Ohh.

The seeds that I sowed...

Nono, looking at it in hindsight, I also didn't have a moment to spare.

"...ah."

"?"

Come to think of it and looking at Ilya's arm, there was a cut after all.

Well, usually speaking stopping one slash from a scimitar with your arm wouldn't lead to just a little cut.

Her arm is so resilient I almost wanted to shout out "What exactly is your body made of?"

"Please show it to me."

"Ah, no, such conc-"

"Just do it."

I forcibly took Ilya's arm and laid my hand on the cut.

"——Heal."

It wasn't such an exhausting wound.

Thus it closed right away

Actually, bruises are scary because of infections and so.

"Thank you... very much..."

"No, I wish I could do more for you."

To pay her back.

But it was mysterious.

I kept holding Ilya's arm like that and carefully stroked it a bit.

Her skin was so smooth.

It was soft, and you wouldn't call her muscular.

Or rather, her arm was delicate.

"Excuse me..."

"Ah, I'm sorry! Curiosity got the better of me."

I let go of Ilya's arm as she gave me a troubled look.

Uhhhm.

What's the secret behind her Protection 5?

Something doesn't quite add up.

Is she not human?

"Oy."

"Ah, yes?"

From beyond the door, Blackie came in to check up on us.

"The Firm's combat slaves are looking after this house. Relax, they won't lose to some bandits."

"Eh?"

My wonderment at why the Firm went so far must've shown on my face and been seen through by him.

Is there a merit for the Firm in protecting this town?

"In return, I'm going to take this one with me. It seems Bertrand is having a tough time on the meadows outside of town."

So Ilya alone is more important than the combat slaves outside?

That weird. Wouldn't that mean the price she's being sold for is too cheap?

Is there... something?

"Are bandits still left?"

"Nahh, you can probably say the bandits have been wiped from the town. The firm and the guys from the militia are making rounds to make sure."

Then what are they having a hard time with?

With the sharp look in his eyes grim as always, Blackie managed to squeeze out one phrase.

"————it's a dragon."

After reaching the large street, we could bodily feel its stature and roar even if we didn't want to.

The dragon was magnificently reigning over the meadows where I'd been attacked by a puppy in the very beginning.

"Tsk, it's already come that close."

As Blackie said, earlier I hadn't felt those roars or the tremors coming along with them.

No, had it even existed in the first place?

Had it suddenly appeared?

But as a reality, right now it was there. That phantasmal life form giving off an overwhelming pressure.

This may be a fantasy world, but I didn't expected meeting one quite this soon.

My experiences so far were plenty unreal already, but this takes the cake.

It's so huge I can't quite believe it exists in this world.

Had dinosaurs still been alive, it might've been different, but the biggest I've seen were the elephants in the zoo.

It's still ways away, but... isn't there something wrong with my sense of perspective?

It has the intensity of a moving house...

"We have to make Aunty and the people in the town evacuate!"

"——thou can leave that to the people who are supposed to deal with that"

I was talked to from the sky.

The one who landed next to me was Till.

Her way of movement is really too peculiar. She keeps surprising me, this girl...

But more importantly!

"Till!"

There was any number of things I wanted to say to her, but her eyes signaled me to shut up.

Uhh... she's only a little child, but somehow I can't oppose her.

"You bitch! Are you an elf!?"

Seeing Till, Blackie got furious.

Which reminds me, Till doesn't try to hide what she is.

Couldn't she easily hide those lovely, pointed ears if she wanted to?

She just has to let down her hair.

Well, the twintails are cute though.

I suppose Till doesn't care much about our circumstances.

At any rate, my ears aren't particularly pointed, I arbitrarily confirmed by touched them.

"Thou are noisy, black one. Can't thou understand now is not the time? Before barking, thou would better help with the evacuation."

With a jerk of her chin, Till called attention to the dragon.

And I completely agreed with her.

"Oy, Alice, right! We're going to talk about this later!"

"Ehh—"

But I only just met her, too—?

Even if we talk about her, nothing will come of it...

Blackie gathered the nearby people from the Firm and instructed them to help as many people escape as possible.

Actually it would be better for Aunty to rest, but I asked them to help her take refuge, too.

But seeing that dragon, I couldn't stop where I was.

And when we had finished giving some rough orders and it was finally time to do something about the dragon...

"——Oh my, oh my, having a little chat all together? How very relaxed of you."

Suddenly a voice came from the empty air.

"Teleportation magic? Thy ways are vulgar as always..."

"I don't appreciate you deprecating the legacy of the past... I am a researcher of the truth. There is nothing vulgar about it."

A little distance away from where we were gathered, a magic circle formed in mid-air.

It reminded of the magic circle seen at the Ruins in the forest.

Then the air warped——and a woman appeared.

"It's been a long time, hag of ice and snow."

"So thou dare come and show thy face, Libra."

Only Till responded like it was normal; Ilya and I, even Blackie were too taken aback to be able to move.

The woman had dark-brown skin and eyes red like dripping blood.

Her hair was silver, or rather, white.

Only, it was so glossy it didn't look white, and it was long.

That hair was gathered in a loose braid.

"So, just how many souls did thou use?"

Cold surged up from Till's body.

Her obvious anger made me swallow.

"Let's see. Less than I thought I would, I guess? All because of you, hag. That's why the dragon is half-assed, too."

I reflexively looked at the dragon that ominously made the earth rumble.

For the moment, the dragon was rampaging over the meadows outside town and it was probably the people from the Firm who were still fighting it, like Blackie had said.

Frankly I had no idea how to deal with it, and she called it half-assed.

But against something I was planless against... Till would?

"Thou really are a shame. It was one's failure to let thee live!"

"Ahaha, you're wrong, I'm a huge success! Thanks to you, hag, I'm revealing more and more of this world's truth!"

"Thou... what are thou searching? Why did thou come to a remote region such as this?"

"You're asking me? Ahaha, I've been itching to tell you, too! Having people who understand you listen is my greatest pleasure!"

Exposed to Till's cold anger, that abnormal woman continued laughing without concern.

She gave me the shivers.

"Right, right. I observed something! Just nearby, a little while ago there was a 'singularity'."

"A singularity, thou say?"

Lately...

Just nearby...?

"Isn't it an old story? People being spirited away, or on the contrary people suddenly appearing? I want to solve that mystery! Don't you think it's negligent for anybody with wisdom to ignore that, hag? You do, don't you!"

Now I trembled.

"For that sake, thou guided those ruffians, gathered souls, summoned the dragon and ransacked this place, is that it?"

I didn't want to think of it.

I didn't want anything to occur to me.

"Hmm, I guess that's how it is? No matter where I go, there are stocks of more than enough souls. I also don't know how to find the singularity yet. So all I can do is repeat trial and error like always, right?"

"——Thou are garbage."

"Oh! Ahaha! I'm not so overconfident to slug it out with you directly, hag. Bye!"

The instant Till raised her hand, the woman called Libra opened a magic circle and jumped in.

"I was happy, I really was, hag! So happy to meet you, you're cute as ever. Now enjoy the dragon to your heart's content! It's made from the town's precious souls! And while it's half-assed, it's a special one summoned where a singularity happened!"

Her figure faded, so Till lowered her hand.

———but there was another person charging.

"YOU BITCH! YOU BIIIIIIITCH!!"

With a loud scream, Blackie jumped at the disappearing woman.

But his attack only futilely cut through air.

Till had already lowered her hand.

Of course it would've ended like this.

"Solt... san..."

His back trembling with anger seemed smaller than usual.

"... one does not approve of thy methods. That is one's absolute truth."

Till's whisper seemed somewhat sad, but she immediately directed her eyes upwards, at the dragon.

"Alright, we're stopping that. Lend me thy help, Alice."

"...of course. We're going to stop it. That is... something that I have to stop."

I was balling my fists so hard the nails cut into my palms.

"...? Oh, well. The black one over there and——the dragon lass. Thou are going to help, too."

"——!"

Ilya, who for some reason had hidden her presence so far as if to hide from Till, trembled.

"Dragon...?"

Really, just how many circumstances does everyone here have?

Making Solt-san tremble with anger.

Making Ilya scared.

Making Till sad.

Most likely, they all had hidden pain, but we all worked together to stop the dragon.

No matter how we felt inside...

Ice Dragon

Right outside the town, you couldn't help but notice the dragon.

On the meadows lay corpses, corpses, corpses...

Members of the militia or the firm's combat slaves.

They fought with their lives and met that terrible end.

"Bertrand, fall back. We're somehow going to take care of the rest," Blackie shouted to Bertrand-san who was commanding the combat slaves.

Bertrand-san looked towards us, who had formed an impromptu party.

Only when his eyes fell on Till, they widened for just a moment, but he turned back to Blackie right away as if nothing had happened.

"Solt... Can you defeat it? That thing?"

A winged, four-legged reptile.

Not that I know if it can really be categorized as a reptile.

Anyways, it looks ferocious.

It had one horn and a mouth so wide it seemed it could swallow an elephant whole.

Its muscular body was covered with strong scaled that seemed to let no weapon pass.

The tail growing from its back gave felt like it could smash a house with one swipe.

That huge body was sometimes supported only on two legs and swung claws around that seemed like they could tear through metal.

And to begin with, it was just big.

It wouldn't be an overstatement to say that the difference in mass was also the difference in power.

There was no way it didn't scare you.

That was a dragon.

"If we don't do something, we're all going to die," Blackie replied easily and drew two daggers.

"You can talk... Miss. You're not going to fight, too, are you, Miss?"

"Bertrand-sama, I may not be up to it, but I have things I want to protect, too."

"Hmm. It may be bad style for an adult to fall back, but mistaking my role would be the height of foolishness. I shall take the combat slaves and help the evacuation."

"Please do."

Did he notice when to pull out because he was a merchant?

Both Bertrand-san and I had questions we wanted to ask the other, but now was not the time.

After the combat slaves completely disengaged from the dragon, Bertrand-san jauntily withdrew to the city.

The combat slaves mainly fought with bows, so their withdrawal was swift.

I had no idea how effective they were against the dragon, but they surely must have annoyed it.

And thus, only we were left in front of it.

"——"

I looked at us and the dragon.

When it laid its snake-like eyes on me, I got goosebumps.

Level 1 Ice Dragon

The enemy's Status floated in front of my eyes.

"An Ice Dragon... damn Libra, planning for one."

The deep blue scales were exactly right to call it an Ice Dragon.

But that being said...

"More importantly... Level 1?"

Somehow that makes me feel we can defeat it, am I imagining things?

"In the end, levels are nothing but an indicator how trained you are for your age. It's pointless to pay it too much heed."

Eh?

What's that all about?

"Here it comes!"

Blackie's voice was strained.

After watching the situation for a while, the dragon finally made its move.

First, an attack with its tail.

It roared and swung around that deadly weapon thicker than a tree.

For the dragon, it might just have been testing the waters, but for us, it wasn't funny.

Getting hit by that mass would turn us into minced meat at once.

...not that I want to imagine that.

I jumped backwards right away.

Till escaped into the sky.

——However.

"Take that," Blackie ordered Ilya.

Don't be stupid!!

"..."

Ilya obediently stepped forward.

"——With this body, I shall become a shield for all. Ancient Field!"

Ilya's body was wrapped in green light.

"Hoh... so the lass was an ancient dragon."

In front of us, Ilya was hit by the tail that alone was more that just a few times her weight.

It was so overwhelming, I couldn't make a sound.

But the surprising thing happened then.

Ilya——stopped the tail.

"————"

The shining, green barrier... -like thing stopped the tail in place.

The wind pressure from the inertia born from suddenly stopping that massive attack almost blew me away.

Although the person who stopped that attack in the first place didn't even take one step back.

Ilya... amazing.

"But like this, that lass...," murmured Till, who had landed next to me, while staring at Blackie.

That Blackie on the other hand had taken Ilya stopping the attack for granted and already charged at the dragon.

He made use of the opening the dragon showed as its attack was stopped to slash at its abdomen.

"Tsk! Hard!"

Only a metallic sound rang out and there was no indication he had dealt the dragon any damage.

Blackie, who could be squashed under the dragon, promptly retreated behind Ilya.

"..."

I was annoyed.

"Split the heavens and become a ray of light, to strike my enemies! Thunder!"

Then how about magic?

My Thunder directly hit the dragon's huge body.

"GAHHH!" it screamed and writhed in agony.

It worked a bit?

"Hmm, Lightning attribute? So thou have a good affinity to it, Alice."

"Hey, don't just look on and do something, Till! You could easily defeat it, couldn't you?"

"Libra is behind this, she will surely have a countermeasure against one——but fine."

Like going up the stairs, Till took to the skies.

At the same time, her body gave off blue light.

Till's incantation!

"Third winter sending the world to demise, bring demonic ice to end it all———Fimbul!"

Being able to see that mana, it probably scared me the most of all of us.

Another order of magnitude, meant exactly this.

Earlier, Till had rained snow on the entire town. But it probably simply wasn't an option for Till to turn the whole town into ice.

The magic Till had chanted was fundamentally different from the low-class magic I was using.

Anyone can understand that.

But it wasn't just a difference in the magic, her basic mana was terrific, too.

And that's what I sensed.

That magic of Till's froze the air, brought a storm, became a blizzard of ice swords and assaulted the Ice Dragon.

It even froze exhaled air, an absolute zero not even allowing you to breathe.

If you take that attack, you won't get away for nothing.

I understood why she made me leave Shion-san's party and form one with her.

Get dragged into that, and you'll die.

No doubt about it.

"Eh...?"

I had overestimated that overwhelming firepower.

Had thought the fight was over.

But the Ice Dragon's body was wrapped in blue light which intercepted——no, absorbed Till's magic?

I even thought it grew even bigger, more ferocious after taking Till's magic.

No, it wasn't just my thinking, it really grew bigger!

"Hmm... special-made, is it," Till displeasedly muttered and landed.

The Ice Dragon, now reminiscent of Godzilla and the like, swung its arm as if to swipe us away like insects.

Ilya took it, but——!

"Urg..."

"Ilya!"

Blood was flowing from Ilya's mouth!

"Dodge it, Ilya! Bearing those attacks is ridiculous!"

"I am very sorry, Alice-sama. I cannot move nimbly as everybody else. This is how I fight."

"!"

I see, Ilya's Agility... she's so strong, so I forgot, but that's the unchanging truth.

"Split the heavens and become a ray of light, to strike my enemies! Thunder!!"

My magic, unlike Till's, was not absorbed.

But how much damage I was actually dealing...

Blackie saw it as a chance and slashed at the dragon, but regretfully, his blades were warded off.

"Hm? Watch out!"

The Ice Dragon got on all fours and opened his mouth wide.

Only one thing came to mind.

"Its breath is coming! Step back, dragon lass!"

Standing in front of us, Ilya stared right down the dragon's throat.

"... I shall ward it off!"

"Thou one-sided fool!!"

From next to me, Till jumped to the very front——in front of Ilya.

"Till!?"

That's not what magi do!

But even if we were to run, the dragon could just turn its head and catch them with the breath. I couldn't move from behind Ilya.

I unintentionally watched the events unfold.

"Line up with the kings of the underworld, become a inviolable gate and ward off assault——Icicle Garden!!"

Along with the end of Till's incantation, we were surrounded by a barrier of ice.

In the next moment, the Ice Dragon breathed out.

The ice barrier took the breath straight on.

It sounded like the ghastly, thunderous roar when the house you're holing up in is directly hit by a large hurricane.

No, maybe it would be better to say it sounded like a house directly hit by a hurricane and creaking like it was about to be torn to shreds any second?

Either way, its power was unmistakably terrible. Watching behind us, ice bullets repelled by the ice barrier rained down on the town.

It sent a shiver down my spine, but now I could only leave it to Bertrand-san.

Inside the uncomfortable barrier, I finally felt the fury outside pass.

The dragon finished breathing and got back up on two legs.

"...phew, so one could defend against it. Had it passed the barrier, we would have all died."

"..."

I felt Till had whispered something terrifying, but let's not mind that.

Ilya passed by her and placed herself at the front again.

Till exasperatedly shook her head.

"We have no idea how long the dragon lass will last. One shall enchant thy weapons to strengthen them, black one, so take that down already."

"...alright."

"——could you strengthen mine, too?" someone called from the side.

"Onee-chan!!"

"Hey, Alice. Sheesh, why did you leave the party so suddenly? I was a little worried!"

"Ehm, as you can see..."

"I know, let me into the party again."

"Y-yes!"

I invited Shion as told.

"How did you get here?"

"Inside the bandit hideout, there was a magic circle. It teleported us to the top of the hill."

So that's how the bandits got to the town without meeting anyone!

So it really was that Libra woman's doing!

"Hmm... one doesn't know who thou are, but we don't need rabble?"

"You sure talk big with that cute face!"

That's right, Till!

My Onee-chan is the strongest human there is!?

"Oy, cut the chatter. Don't we have work to do?"

"One knows and is already casting."

The arrival of an all too reliable ally made me regain my bearings.

With one less worry, my positive thinking came back.

Ehm... come to think of it, aren't I forgetting someone?

Oh, I guess I'm imagining things.

Fragments of Feelings

"Come, ice fairy, become my blade——Ice Enchant!"

With her left and right hand each, Till enchanted Shion-san's and Blackie's weapons.

...this is Double Cast, isn't it?

She just nonchalantly used Double Cast, didn't she?

"Oy, is it going to be okay with the Ice element?" Blackie asked the plausible thing.

Till just shrugged.

"Worry not, one only enchanted the strength of your weapons, one didn't give them the element. One understands that much. Though actually, if someone could enchant it with Lightning, matters would greatly differ..."

Yes, yes, I'm sorry, alright.

"... If I shoot Thunder at the weapons, it might stick! Sizzle sizzle! Let's try it, Onee-chan!"

"Yeah... let's not."

She declined!?

"Hah, as long as my blades work, I'll do this."

Without showing a shred of interest in me, Blackie headed for the Ice Dragon.

Well, Ilya's doing her best, so that's natural.

Yes, it's natural.

I'm not sulking or anything.

With a wry smile on her lips, Shion-san patted me on the head twice and shifted to attacking, too.

That's how you do it!

This difference in consideration, do you get this, Blackie?

"So, Till. Can I just keep attacking it with Thunder?"

Ilya's took the attacks of the raging Ice Dragon and created a safe area for Blackie and the rest of us.

Shion-san kept up fighting it in close quarters while dodging every single of its attacks.

Both of them had their lives on the line.

Not being able to do anything substantial vexed me and made me impatient.

"Hoh... Huge Boobs over there is good."

"Please don't ever call her that ever again."

"What are thou getting angry over? Oh, well, Alice! Currently, though are only able to cast that one spell?"

"Yes..."

Lying wouldn't change anything about it.

And Heal was something else entirely

As I was, I couldn't use any high-class magic, or support magic, like Till could.

I was aware that I was useless.

"Hehe, thou are so cute."

"...eh?"

"Nothing. Hey, Alice. Have thou ever learned magic from someone before?"

"No, I haven't."

I raised my level, finally learned my spells, and figured the rest out myself.

"One wouldn't say one won't be your mentor, thou know?"

"Eh!?"

Come to think of it, before entering the city, she may have said something similar.

Although I find it a little mysterious why she'd set her eyes on me...

But more importantly, people were fighting at the moment!

Impatience welled up inside me.

It wasn't the time to worry long.

"My mentor! Please become my mentor!"

Right now!

"That is a commitment. Thou need to think well about whose disciple thou become. No matter how much in a hurry thou may be," Till smiled wickedly as she threatened me.

Still, I cannot think calmly in such a state of emergency.

——But I had thought it through.

I knew more than enough about Till's true power.

And moreover, although we hadn't known each other that long, I knew about her temperament, too.

"I would be proud to learn under a gentle person like Till."

"————Thou are embarrassing me," Till whispered and threw something to me.

I caught it in a hurry.

It was...

"A bracelet?"

It was a silver bracelet with a mysteriously glowing, expensive-looking golden jewel.

"Thou are so shallow. Put it on."

"Ah, yes."

I did wonder if it was alright, but obediently put it on anyway.

Not knowing if I should put it on the left of the right arm, I put it on the left one for the moment.

After I put it on my arm, it glowed lightly and tightened closely around my arm.

Like it was part of my body.

"...as one thought, thou could equip it."

"Uhm... this isn't the kind that I can't take off, is...?"

It fit so good to my body, I couldn't take it off no matter how much I pulled.

Don't tell me this was some cursed initiation!?

"That is called the Sylv Faeria. Well, it's the proof of being one's disciple. It raises the power of magic... or something like it."

"Eh? Is it alright for me to receive something so precious!?"

I thought in that case Till should use it herself.

But Till only laughed while watching the battle fold out.

"Thou may still not understand. The joy of watching others grow."

"Till...?"

"Now, hurry it up. Chant that Thunder thou are so good with."

Till pushed my back and sent me off.

"Wawa..."

And then I had a sudden thought.

I spontaneously turned around and asked her.

"Till... you haven't fought seriously at all yet, have you?"

If Till seriously gave it her all, she wouldn't lose, would she?

That's what had come to me.

"Who knows?"

She just laughed at me and had apparently no intention to answer.

By adding Shion-san, the battle situation had turned around

The one-sided battle had reached an equilibrium.

By taking the front position in turn, they gave each other leisure space.

When Ilya was at the front, Shion-san repeated hit-and-run attacks while taking it moderately easily.

On the other hand, when Shion-san was at the front, she drew all attacks on herself and dodged them, lowering the burden on Ilya.

Ilya had been completely exhausted, but she seemed to be recovering to a degree.

I keenly felt the importance of switching out the tank when fighting against strong enemies.

And this time, Blackie's attacks cut open the Ice Dragon's stomach and dealt damage to it.

Blackie wasn't as fast as Shion-san or as hard as Ilya.

But, it seemed his attack power was higher than the two's.

If it was higher than Shion-san's, that meant... Strength 4?

With weapons in both his hands, his style seemed to imply it didn't need any defense. It felt somewhat risky...

Anyhow, the cooperation of the three was outstanding, and compensating for the fact that it was their first combat together, you could feel their overwhelming sense for the flow of battle.

The Ice Dragon on the other hand didn't even have time for another breath attack.

——but the lack of a decisive attack on our end was true as well.

I stroked the bracelet on my left arm.

I should be able to do it.

In this situation, Till wouldn't do anything meaningless.

Saving the town while acting indifferent, worrying about Ilya and taking the the breath head-on, and then——she'd even looked at that woman with sadness in her eyes.

"——Split the heavens and become a ray of light!"

I raised my left hand and started chanting.

The bracelet started glowing.

And then, the light took at clear shape in front of me.

A golden pentagram.

It was floating in front of my left hand that was activating the magic.

"To strike my enemies!"

I myself felt how tremendous the amount of mana was.

It was... being amplified. Or rather, the image of my mana which I hadn't been able to put to use myself was being poured into magic, leaving none behind, was closer.

With this...

With this power, that simple dragon was...!

"Thunder!!!"

A flash shot out from the pentagon.

From its appearance, it wasn't something you could call it low-class magic anymore.

If the magic I had shot so far had been a gun, this was a cannon.

"...!"

The consumed amount of mana was enormous.

So far, I hadn't ever exhausted the mana inside my body with one Thunder.

But its impact was that much more tremendous, too————

"Gahhhhhh!!"

Pierced by the lightning, the dragon writhed in pain like never before.

Having a living being the size of a house rage in front of you does have that great intensity, but...

But, we still hadn't defeated it?!

"...amazing," Shion-san looked at me with a smile.

Blackie glared.

Ilya's eyes were wide with surprise.

"But... repeating this..."

I couldn't shoot the next one right away.

Even though I thought that would end it.

Lately, I was fine ignoring the cooldown of a normal Thunder to a degree, but...

Not this one.

Would ten seconds cooldown be enough?

——But that thought really was too naive.

Like he had judged me to be the greatest threat, the Ice Dragon planted all fours on the ground and turned to me.

"Like I'll let you!"

Shion-san slashed at him, but the Ice Dragon didn't falter from the wounds.

Its big frame settled securely on the ground, it was unperturbed.

"Tsk!"

Blackie tried to cut down the dragon with the daggers in his hands, but even with furrows in its belly, the Ice Dragon didn't fall.

Does it let us cut its meat to break our back?

Seeing how it understood where the battle would be decided made me amazed at its instinct of the wild.

——Heyhey, do you want to kill me that much?

Will be you satisfied if you kill me?

Honestly, I——wonder how I feel about that

I'm scared to die.

Of course.

I don't like pain.

Am I returning to nothing after I die?

I'm even scared to imagine it.

Although even that fear might be pointless because you might not understand anything after you die.

But right now, being scared is natural, that's a given.

——But, it might be unexpectedly easy, too.

"...I have no idea, do I."

The Ice Dragon opened its maw.

The breath was coming.

My own preparations?

I get the feeling I won't make it by just a little bit.

This dragon had killed members of the militia and combat slaves.

But in the end, it might just have reacted to danger, too.

Suddenly, my hatred for the dragon lessened.

Then who should I hate instead?

That woman?

Or, after all...

———coming to this world half in fun, myself?

It's true that I hadn't ever imagined it would come to this.

A lot of townspeople must have died.

People bled to death, people burned to death, people crushed to death; I remembered those scenes.

I turned indifferent to it all.

And in front of my eyes, my judgement was finally prepared.

I thought my eyes met the dragon's.

The breath————came.

"———"

I thought I'd died.

I inadvertently closed my eyes.

Inside the darkness.

I thoght "Oh?"

It took awfully long, so I opened my eyes.

"UWAAHHHHHH———————!!"

"——I-lya!?"

In front me me, Ilya was stopping the breath.

Unlike Till's barrier earlier she was literally——shielding me with her body.

The blades of ice and the brutal cannon balls coming with the force of a blizzard.

She was stopping them with her body alone.

"——didn't... you?"

"Eh...?"

In that storm of destructive ice and snow, Ilya squeezed out words for me

While under attacks too overwhelming for her delicate body.

Once more, clearly.

"You tried to die——didn't!?"

"———"

I had nothing to answer to that frail voice.

"I..."

Showing me her profile, Ilya glared at me while blood was trickling from her mouth.

"I won't allow you!! Because even I!!"

The courteous, mild-mannered Ilya was nowhere to be seen.

There was only a girl shouting the desire from the bottom of her heart.

"Because even I————want to live!!"

"Il-ya..."

The dragon girl had said.

——I want to live.

Could there be another desire that pure?

Once more, I tried reaching my guilty conscience.

I tried to remember.

For a moment, I tried to think calmly.

"...haha, what's this."

I put my feelings of guilt on a scales.

"I also wanted to live..."

The moment I said it out loud, tears welled up.

"——Split the heavens and become a ray of light, to strike..."

Really, I don't hate the Ice Dragon.

If anything, it might be a victim, too.

Have you been born just now?

Did you want to live more?

Ahh, come to think of it, this is the place where I first took a life.

I recalled the memories from that time.

I also recalled my pledge from that time.

Yeah, I really am bad with that.

But still, I'm sorry. I also.

——————I also want to live in this world.

Therefore————goodbye.

"My enemies! THUNDER!!"

The flash pierced the breath and enveloped the Ice Dragon.

And left a thundering roar on the beautiful meadows.

Setting off

Three days had passed since the fight with the Ice Dragon.

To begin with the conclusion, the townspeople thanked me.

Because we repelled such a clear danger.

Apparently the militia had been wiped out.

The bandits who had remained at the hideout had been routed by Shion-san.

There seemed to have been a number of magi and there had been victims among the assault group, too.

Among them, the guild members attacking from a certain direction had been wiped out.

According to one member who had been nearby and luckily escaped, it had all been done by one dark-skinned woman...

Both that woman and the bandit group are gone now.

And while there had been damage to the town, it was along the way to regaining its peace.

I had gone around and checked if I couldn't help people.

It had been difficult, people being surprised by Heal and thanking me for it.

After all I may have been a reason for this whole mess. I really felt like running away.

But apparently only the priest in the single church and I can use Heal in this town.

...no, I'm certain Till can use it too, but asking that much of her would go too far.

Ostensibly, Till said she didn't want to get involved with humans.

Speaking of good news, Eleanor-san and her impertinent little brother Kal, as well as their family, were alright.

They cried when we met again inside the town. It was a bit overwhelming.

Anyhow, the more I was thanked, the more could I feel my smile cramp.

The three days passed in that fashion.

And in the third night, I was sitting on the bed, grasping my knees.

When depressed, why does that posture already make it a little better?

"...haa."

"Hey, I get why you're down, but really want to know: Why are you occupying *my* bed?"

Right, I was being depressed *in my sister's* room.

While sitting at her desk and writing a report for the guild, she had gotten tired of my ceaseless sighing and broached the topic.

"Don't mind those small things..."

"I really don't get whether you're depressed or not."

To begin with, does this time's incident have a causal relationship with me?

There's no information allowing a clear decision and I only have guesses.

But speaking from those guesses alone, you could say there is a causal relationship.

But it's also an endless like the question of the hen and the egg. It feels wrong for me to be depressed over it.

"Uncle and Aunty are?"

"I think Pops is still out, helping restore the town. But the fires went out pretty much right away and not many buildings were destroyed by magic, so I think they'll be done in no time."

With his hurt leg, Uncle hadn't participated in fighting the Ice Dragon and had gone help with the town's evacuation right away.

In the battle with the Ice Dragon, apparently there had been no human casualties from its deflected breath.

That's something to be grateful for.

"Mom was sewing something, I think. I did tell her to take it slowly, though."

"Is, that so."

Over the last three days, Aunty has recovered enough to live as usual.

Even if you close wounds with magic, it seems it takes time to recover the lost stamina.

But then, from the level of modern medicine in my former world, it was a miracle.

"——you know, thanks, Alice."

"..."

"But if I say so, you'll just feel down, won't you," Shion-san laughed and teased me.

"...how long are you going to keep doing paperwork? Aren't you going to sleep?"

"Ohoh, is this princess displeased? Wait, you're planning to sleep in my bed?"

"Right now, I desire human warmth."

It definitely wasn't anything to feel guilty over.

"Hehe, alright. Let's sleep."

"Wai-, so daring!"

"Why are you getting shy all of a sudden? You're so complicated..."

If I told her I said it just because, I think she'd hit me...

"Understood. Come at me!"

"Alice, are you really feeling down?"

Shion-san gave me a playful punch as she came to my side and we fell on the bed together.

Lying face-up, we watched the ceiling.

"... Onee-chan, you smell so good."

"Do I? I think you smell better though."

... that means my body and soul slowly diverge more and more, huh.

"Onee-chan, do you have someone you like?"

"Hehe, you're the age where you're interesting in love? You're such a maiden, Alice, having nightly talks about love."

"Somehow that take really annoys me..."

But Shion-san's pretty, and refreshing, and she has a good personality, and her breasts are big.

Her figure is nice, and she can fight, and she's gentle.

Just how amazing is she!?

"I've never really thought about it so far, I guess."

I'm sure if they heard this, a good portion of the men in town would cry.

"But lately, there's this person who I just can't get out of my mind."

"That little sister that makes so much work for you, you mean."

Even I can guess that much, yes, yes.

"Hehe, maybe."

Ah, but with Shion-san around, I really calm down.

My frayed heart is also being somewhat healed by her.

At the same time, reluctance to part wells up.

The people in this house are family to me.

Shion-san is precious to me.

Once more, I realized that.

"Onee-chan, tomorrow... I'm leaving for the capital."

"... I see."

"You're not surprised."

"That's not quite true. But I somehow had that hunch."

"... I see."

I'd wanted to travel the world in the first place.

But right now, more than traveling, I want to move to a safer town than this, to a better protected town than this.

I no longer think it's fine for me to die, I can't.

But to stop disastrous incidents from happening as much as possible, I think it's better to move to a more secure town.

In the royal capital with its knight order, it should at least be more secure than here.

"Do you have a plan?"

"Yes, Till's going to look after me."

To begin with, since I became Till's disciple, we have to be together for training me.

"That elf missy, huh."

"She's an awfully good girl."

Good girl. I have no idea if that expression is fitting, but what should I do, it just fits her appearance too well.

"I see... it's going to get lonely."

My chest tightened.

"D——," I start, but then I swallow.

"I've really... been in your care, so I'll at least leave some money."

"I don't need it. By the way, how much do you have anyway?"

"Till lent me some money, as an advance for the necessities."

"Hee, so that girl has money?"

"Yes, she gave me a platinum coin."

"Platinum!!?"

As one would expect, that made Shion-san jump up in surprise.

Platinum coins were the highest coinage in this world and were worth a hundred times as much as gold coins.

Well, in other words they were worth just that, a hundred gold coins.

"I've already used forty gold coins though, on something personal."

"Just how wild is your spending..."

No, really.

"I put a bag with fifty of the remaining coins in a drawer in your desk, Onee-chan."

"Heh, you're such a stupid. But I'll take it."

"I thought you'd say so. That's my Onee-chan!"

She really considered my mentality.

"I'm going to use it for getting the town back on track."

"Yes, I'll be happy if you use it for what you like."

I felt I had more or less said what I wanted to, so I rolled over to hide myself from Shion-san.

Behind my back, I felt Shion-san also lie down on the bed once more.

With nothing better to do, I touched the bracelet around my left arm.

I was uneasy about going to an unknown place, but the anticipation I had felt in the beginning was there, too.

My traveling companions could be trusted.

Tillbell Aynshaura.

Currently, for her stay she had taken a room in an inn in this town.

Among the names I've heard in this world, hers is the first with a last name.

Is she a noble in elven society?

Or do elves have different customs altogether?

Unknown lands, unknown customs.

I can interest myself for everything in this world.

In truth, the world before my rebirth also had many unknown things left, so I'm very self-centered.

But I finally feIt *fired up* about something.

Although I hadn't just experienced good things, but a fair share of bad things, too, in such a short time.

Strangely, I don't feel the wish to return to my former world.

Just, in my former world I probably disappeared like I'd gone missing without in trace.

Like this, to my family *over here*, I can properly say goodbye before going on my trip.

Thinking about that, I at least want to tell my family in my former world that I'm doing fine.

And 'I'm going.'

At least that much.

"——Alice."

"...?"

While immersion myself in my thoughts before falling asleep, I was called to from behind.

The tone was unusually serious, but also gentle.

"Are you awake?"

"Ah, yes."

"Turn this way for a second."

Even though I had in fact rolled over because sleeping while facing Shion-san's way isn't too good for my mental health.

If she wanted me to, there was nothing I could do.

"...okay."

I heavily rolled over and turned the other way——in other words, Shion-san's way.

"——eh?"

For an instant I was hugged——and kissed.

"...on the forehead?"

On the forehead.

"Hmm? Did you want it on the lips?"

Seeing Shion-san's teasing smile up close, heat shot into my cheeks.

"S-surprise attacks are... bad for my heart..."

And what's with you anyway!?

Are you some handsome guy!?

I also want to do that!!

"Alice... no matter how far apart we are, you'll always be important to me."

"Yes... I also love you, Onee-chan."

"Hehe, that makes me happy."

Overcome with sudden emotion, I hugged Shion-san.

Shion-san gently stroked my hair, like she was comforting a child.

... if this feels the best in the world to me, can I still go back?

Mentally, I mean.

"... Onee-chan, you're unfair."

"How so?"

"You're too cool."

Like some time ago, she bumped her forehead against mine.

"Are you ready to leave?" Till on the coachman's seat asked my while yawning.

In the early morning, not many people were in front of the town gates. Only some farmers passed by.

Till had bought this carriage from the guild.

She really had money, this girl.

"Yes," I nodded, and Till pulled the bridles to give the sign to advance.

Till really can skillfully do anything, I was impressed.

I'd said my goodbyes to Uncle and Aunty.

I'd thought they'd scold me for suddenly breaking that to them so early in the morning, but I'd been wrong.

Apparently Aunty had somehow found out I'd go on a trip, so she'd even gotten me a coat, a change of clothes and a new Leather Robe.

She still wasn't in normal condition, but she'd already sewn those for me. Her powers of observation were amazing.

There's a limit to how much you should surprise people

I cried a little.

Uncle... he on the other hand cried rivers.

His snot ran, too.

It was a bit disgusting.

Seeing a man of such a good age cry himself to pieces does have something taxing...

But I really am grateful to him.

He's the very first person who taught me the ropes for living in this world.

I told them they didn't have to see me off. Otherwise I'd never be able to leave.

If they had in fact seen me off, my tears might not have stopped.

"——Alice-sama."

"Hm?"

The girl next to me on the carriage's load tray as I watched the town grow smaller called out to me.

I turned around to her and found myself reflected in her clear, emerald eyes.

Her fluffy, fluttering blond hair was radiant in the morning sun.

"In place of your sister, I shall protect you, Alice-sama."

"Yep... because you're strong, Ilya, I have high hopes for you."

This was the extravagance I allowed myself in this town.

No, because I bought what I wanted for a price I acknowledged, you might not call it extravagant?

"Yes, this body is Alice-sama's shield. I shall flawlessly protect Milady from all trials and tribulations."

In fact, this girl is still full of things I don't know about her.

Not that I doubt her, but her loyalty to me is a mystery.

"...hey, Ilya?"

"Yes."

I looked into her eyes that had taken a somewhat gloomy expression."

"Make sure to protect yourself, too, okay? Ehm... that's an order."

She had expressed that pure desire to live to me, so I think I might not have needed to say it though.

"——*Yes, Milady.*"

Ilya had set on to say something but swallowed her words and instead gave that stiff reply.

Behind us, on the coachman's seat, Till let out a big yawn.

Ahh, all things considered, this is a nice weather.

I lay down on the load tray. The sky above was endlessly blue.

Mentor and Disciple

After noon on the day we left Rinnal.

We hadn't reached the royal capital, nor had we reached the next city, but we were getting ready for the famed sleeping outdoors.

Right, I thought we could go on further, but Till said stop so we did.

Well, even if I say sleep outdoors, we had prepared a tent beforehand, so it doesn't feel that uncomfortable.

Besides, I had learned how to put up a tent back when I went to a summer camp, so there was no problem either.

There was a nice place right below some trees, so that's where we put it up.

There was a lake nearby, but even if it should rain a lot, we'd probably notice before the water level rose enough to submerge us.

We made the entrance face downwind, properly fixed the ropes with pegs and preparations were complete.

Well, more or less.

"Good work, Ilya."

"You, too, Alice-sama. I would have made it alone, too."

"It's fine, it's fine."

I don't hate moving my body... originally.

However, it's nice that there's a lake nearby.I can go wash up later.

"Do thou have a moment, Alice?"

While I was taking a breather from putting up the tent, Till came over.

She'd taken care of the horse, but had disappeared along the way.

I wonder what she'd done?

"Yes, what is it?"

"Hm, could thou show one thy Status?"

"Ahh."

Come to think of it, since meeting we haven't had the time, so we hadn't done that kind of self-introduction.

Even though, I should say, she's my proper mentor.

There's no reason for me not to show her.

"Sure. This is it."

Name: Alice
Race: Halfelf
Age: 15
Gender: Female
Class: Mage
Level: 3

As told to by Till, I revealed my Status to her.

Thinking about it, this is the first time I've showed it to someone other than Shion-san in this much detail.

"——W-what? ... a half, thou say?"

As she confirmed my Status, Till's expression hardened as if she'd seen a ghost.

"Whose... child are thou?"

"Eh? Ehh..."

Crap!

Halfs are cool, aren't they?

And riding on that feeling alone, I'd made the setting to half an Elf. But Elves themselves seem particular here, what the hell, this is bad!

I stepped on a landmine!?

"Is it Estoria? Are thou Estoria's child!?"

"Wawa."

Till shook me by the shoulders.

"Honored mentor, please compose yourself."

"Mng..."

Softly rebuked by Ilya, Till awkwardly let go of my shoulders.

Ilya, good job!

I mean, there's nothing I could tell her.

If anything, I'm the child of god.

"I'd known thou were an elf... but a half of all things..."

How should I put it, if Till gets so surprised by it, I start feeling uncomfortable myself.

"Till, isn't it fine now? It's not particularly pleasant having that topic dragged up."

"Apologies. Thou are right."

It's not that it's unpleasant, there's just nothing I can say.

Sorry, Till.

"Anyhow, I also want to know about you, Till. Because there's nothing I know about elves."

"...is that so. Understood."

Name: Tillbell Aynshaura
Race: Elf
Age: 287
Gender: Female
Class: Sage
Level: 275

"... haa?"

I reflexively stared at Till.

"Hm?"

The way her lovely, pointed ears twitched was extremely cute.

And red as apples, well, I guess I should call them rinnals?

Red as rinnals, her springy cheeks made you feel better just looking at them, like she were some pet animal.

Not one strand of her blond hair, tied in twintails, was dull. You could tell its vibrancy at one glance.

There was not a crack in her cherry-blossom pink lips and not one impurity in her eyes blue like the deep sea.

———in other words.

"A Legal Lo-... crap, crap. I mustn't say it out loud. I mustn't."

"Hey, stop it! Do not pet one's head!"

Till brushed my hand away like it was a bother.

"Ah, I'm sorry, my mistake."

By mistake, I poured my affection on her.

By mistake.

"A little girl having not even lived a hundred years will not treat one like a child."

That's an amazing line.

You'd never be able hear that in my former world, would you.

"Are elves that long-living, after all?"

"Did thy mother not——no, that's right. Elves are fundamentally long-living, but people with strong mana are particularly so."

"Hee, then Till can reach an amazing age."

"The village chief is over a thousand."

"A thousand!? Elves are..."

No, wait a second.

Elves with strong mana are particularly long-living?

Then... what about me?

"Alice, thou will probably live more than a normal human's life span."

"I... see..."

Till had replied like she'd read the question off my face.

At the moment, that life span is a fact that hasn't clicked.

"..."

"Ilya...?"

Somehow I got the feeling that Ilya started feeling depressed.

Life span.

From our talk about life spans?

I knew Ilya's Status.

During my business talks with the Firm, it had been shown to me.

And to begin with, now I could operate Ilya's Status myself.

On the other hand, Ilya couldn't operate her own Status.

That was proof I was her master.

In this world, if you couldn't operate your Status, you basically couldn't get a job.

Falling into slavery seemed pretty harsh.

Anyhow, I checked her Status once more.

Name: Ilya
Race: Dragonkind
Age: 16
Gender: Female
Class: Apprentice Lancer
Level: 7

What surprised me when I first saw this Status, well, it was the Apprentice part of her Class.

Because she was that strong, I'd thought she'd been experienced in combat, but apparently not.

Bertrand-san hadn't lied or anything.

She hasn't fought with monsters, but maybe dragonkind was originally blessed with an instinct for combat.

Besides, apparently she'd done practice.

Then, there was Ilya's pure body.

Ilya's pure body.

That's important, so I repeated it.

The guys at the Firm hadn't raped her.

A written pledge from the auntie looking after the Firm's female slaves confirmed that.

They told me to check it myself if felt so inclined, but there's no way I could do that.

No, well... well?

"I want to... live the same time as Alice-sama."

While I was having bad thoughts, Ilya revealed her thoughts on the topic.

So was it really about that?

By the way, elves and dragonkind.

Which were rarer in this world?

Honestly, are they possibly both super-rare?

Ilya is young, she has those looks, and she's strong to boot!

With that combination, the price I bought her for feels cheap instead.

I didn't especially ask the Firm the reason, but...

"Dragon lass. Why don't thou just live the time? It's not that there is no way."

"Honored mentor... please, say no more."

"Although your precious meeting might have been a kind of fate."

"Honored mentor!"

"Hmm?"

Somehow the two had started speaking about something I couldn't follow.

Not that it matters, but could you please stop driving me out of the conversation and heat it up on your own?

But a precious meeting, huh.

Which reminds me, how did Ilya fall into slavery?

And dragonkind... they're not like that Ice Dragon, but human-looking?

As always, Ilya was full of mysteries.

Although, as my slave, I think she would tell me a lot if I ordered her.

But that's a little... it's not how I roll.

"Well, don't get so angry. From one's position, your meeting feels akin to fate," Till admonished Ilya with a gentle look on her face.

Ilya in turn avoided her gaze in perplexity and met my eyes.

"——!"

She immediately looked away.

Uhhhm.

Is she bullying me?

And then, my training under Till already started.

Apparently that's why we stopped while the sun was still high in the sky.

"Alice, how high is thy proficiency with Thunder?"

"Yes. Right now... it's 13."

"Hm. Then get it to 99 before the sun sets."

"Haa...?"

Eh?

Had I misheard?

"Get it to 99 and come back."

"I could hear you!"

I just couldn't believe it!

You don't have to laugh with such a mean look!

"The monsters on the mountain that way are just right for you. I checked it out earlier," Till pointed at the mountain beyond the lake.

So that's why she'd disappeared earlier...

"Proficiency with Attack Magic doesn't go up unless you fight enemies of higher levels or simply strong foes. The basis of everything training while you're young and efficiency is high."

"That's..."

But thinking of Till's scary level, does that mean that Till's not going to get any stronger?

Well, at this point I cannot see the limit to her strength though...

"No need to worry. To begin with, one's level doesn't rise that easily, and it rises no higher than one's age. In thy case, it will stop at 15."

A shocking truth.

Is that how it works?

Well, from seeing Till's level, I'd understood that the limit wasn't 99.

...

Ah, I see.

That reminds me, both Shion-san and Uncle had trained raised their levels almost to their ages, but they hadn't passed them.

That explained it.

"...and if I don't finish by sunset?"

"Hehe, then you don't need to come back."

"Ri—ght?"She's not soft, I see.But this not-soft attitude reminds me of the time I was pushed during club activities.

It's not a bad thing, I think.

"Let us do our best, Alice-sama. Of course, I shall help you."

"One is going to sleep."

This person really is my mentor, right?

At least ask me to stay safe!

"It's fine, I understand! I'll show you!"

My legend begins now!

The time for me and nobody else to become the world's strongest has come!

Get ready and wait for me, Tillbell Aynshaura!

Right, intending to chase her, I'll never catch up.

I have to aim to overtake her!I defiantly looked at Till.

"Hehe."

"Hiii."

Her daunting smile gave me a little scare.

Well, I don't have to antagonize my great senior... maybe.

I can just become my generation's strongest.

I'm sure that's right!

"... thou are so cute."

Till let out another big yawn and walked over to the tent.

Now then, if I waste time, I really might not make it.

"Ahh, one forgot. Make sure to come back to make dinner."

"Are you a demon!?"

And this time, Till really got into the tent while carelessly waving her hand.

"... let's go, Ilya!"

"Yes, Alice-sama!"

Ahh, that immediate affirmation felt so good!

And that marked the beginning of a sleepless night for Ilya and me.

... not in the dirty sense, alright!

Training

"Huhhh, huhhh..."

"Alice-sama, are you alright?"

While gasping for breath, I raised a hand to signal Ilya I'm alright for the moment.

After going around the lake, while going up the mountain, the limit of my endurance had come.

In the first place, there were only not-quite-paths like animal trails.

Add the slope and it's tough on the current me.

"Till went straight over the lake, didn't she... such an unfair shortcut."

That magic to run through the air.

She created footholds out of ice in the air and produced propulsion by exploding them, is the conjecture I made from seeing it a number of times.

The point is the following:

Isn't that a consecutive application of Blizzard?

Isn't she repeatedly creating Blizzards with regulated power in midair?

"Just imagining it, it's awe-inspiring..."

If I'm right, the difference in ability is beyond words.

Does that mean that, during the fight with the Ice Dragon, Till cast high-class magic while running through the air with repeated Blizzards?

I already know that Till can Double Cast.

But still...

"That wall is so high..."

If the current me repeatedly cast Thunder without waiting for the cooldown, I feel I'd collapse after the fourth one.

But even if I could repeatedly use it, I might not be able to run through the air due to the attribute of my magic to begin with?

Of course, it's probably impossible with fire magic, too.

Every attribute should have some special feature, so I guess I don't have to be pessimistic about it.

"I think your mana rivals that of the honored mentor, Alice-sama. I believe in you more than anyone."

"Ilya... you're such a good girl."

I'm the type that improves when praised, that's right.

Ahh, with my current age, she's one year older than me.

But she doesn't seem to find it unpleasant if I talk to her like that.

She answered me by smiling gently.

Still, I remembered while toying with the bracelet around my left arm.

Till had warned me.

I normally shouldn't use it, she said.

In other words, should I just shoot my magic with my right hand?

Certainly, if I use the bracelet, the mana consumption is enormous.

"——Alice-sama, they're coming."

Ilya protectively stepped in front of me.

She took a stance with her iron spear.

Ilya's equipment was that Iron Spear which we had received as service from the Firm and a spare Leather Robe from Aunty.

I was wearing the leather robe that Aunty had fixed and remodeled by adding Uncle's mantle as something of a pareo.

Its defensive properties seemed quite high.

Level 13 Killerwolf

I checked the enemy Status.

Wolves.

Still, after experiencing the fight against the Ice Dragon, I'm comparatively calm now.

But this time, there were more than one.

Four in total.

My first combat against a group.

Come to think of it, I've heard that wolves are good at hunting in a group.

With that thought in mind, suddenly not just the enemies in front of my eyes, but the thicket to the side started bothering me.

——aren't there some still hiding?

"Learn that you will not harm a hair on Alice-sama's body!"

Nonetheless, the enemies before us came first.

With a swipe of her spear, Ilya held the wolves at bay.

What's with this sense of security.

Not being alone is wonderful!

"——Thunder!"

Without chanting, I sent them an instant, preemptive attack.

Shooting out from my right hand wasn't the pentagram-strengthened magic from the fight against the Ice Dragon, but my usual magic.

However, there was no problem with its power.

Catching them off guard, my magic hit one of the wolves and toasted it.

With one of their comrades defeated, the wolves stopped probing the situation and jumped at us.

Ilya stopped all of their attempts through skilled handling of her spear.

Ilya may have low agility, but she was good with her weapon.

How she made use of the spear's reach to zone out the wolves was extraordinary.

I see, this weapon is great for Ilya.

I dare say Ilya isn't suited for swords.

To go at it at close range, you needed agility no matter what.

Although she had the form competing with the bandits, but of course it's better to play to your strengths.

Well, leaving that aside, she really was the best shield for me.

She didn't dodge, but took it all.

And so that the enemies didn't get to me, she zoned them out.

On the backline, there was nothing as reassuring as such an ally.

In that case, I decided to make a somewhat reckless experiment.

I thought I'd repeatedly cast my magic like Till did.

"Thunder!"

The second.

I'd ignored the cooldown.

The second wolf turned into a splendid toast.

I could still go on.

"... Thunder."

The third one.

I hadn't aimed properly and it was dodged.

Was it a problem with my concentration?

I felt dizzy and staggered.

Hmm... was this the limit?

"Thun-..."

"Please stop, Alice-sama."

At the same time as she spoke, Ilya stepped forward and skewered a wolf.

However, maybe the enemy's defensive power exceeded Ilya's attack power, it was no lethal wound.

They repeated such exchanges a few times before Ilya finally defeated that wolf.

As for myself, the world was spinning and spinning and I thought I was done for.

I focused on recovering.

That right there was the nigh insurmountable difference between Level 3 and Level 275!

... no, well, that's a matter of course.

But I can recover from that much dizziness in a bit.

I think I've solidly grown stronger.

"Thunder!"

After recovering, I defeated the first wolf Ilya had driven away.

With that, the proficiency went up by 3.

Uhhhm.

Still, I cannot believe that the difference between Till and me is only in our levels.

Her repeated casting came from the difference in how we used our magic.

Right, so... I need to regulate the output?

"——Alice-sama!"

When Ilya called out to me, my body moved right away.

A wolf had jumped out of the thicket lining the animal trail that had bothered me in the beginning.

I somehow dodged the wolf lunging for my throat by crouching down.

——and, at the same time.

It was a momentary decision, a complete coincidence.

From below, I thrust my palms into the unprotected belly of the wolf whose attack I had dodged.

There was no strength behind it, so it did nearly nothing.

Thus, I hurriedly added my magic.

"——!"

It was an momentary, unstable activation, a Thunder lasting only an instant.

It couldn't defeat the wolf, but...

"This is..."

This idea...?

"I am deeply sorry. Are you alright, Alice-sama?"

Ilya cautiously killed the wounded wolf and came to check up on me.

However, it wasn't the time for that.

"Ha... hahaha! Just you wait, Till!"

I had definitely grasped that sensation.

——I think it's human nature to get elated over such insights. I really do.

"..."

"So, what is it the dragon lass is shouldering? A corpse?"

"No, ehm... how should I put it."

By evening, the battle with the wolves on the mountain and the round trip on the originally harsh way had completely brought be to the limit of my endurance.

On the way back from the mountain, I collapsed and ended up being carried by Ilya all the way to the tent.

I carried Ilya's spear and Ilya carried us both.

Come to think of it, Ilya's Strength was nothing special, but her Endurance was excellent.

Still, how pathetic of me...

Till's half-closed eyes pierced my heart.

There was nothing I could say.

"No matter. Quickly prepare dinner, Alice."

"Demon!!" I shouted from Ilya's back.

Oh, hey, I could still speak...

Alright, what should I make.

Tomorrow we're going to stop by the nearby town once, so I can probably use up what we've brought with us.

Freshness is important.

That being said, we've only brought non-perishable food like bread or jerky anyway.

Well, I individually had packed some vegetables.

For lunch, I'd had Aunty's sandwiches, but my pride didn't allow me to make the same as her...

I have brought spices, too.

"Right. I've felt unsatisfied because all I've had is solid food."

Fortunately, we've brought lots of water.

Our trip wasn't hurried or anything, so it should be alright to use it for something other than drinking.

"Alice-sama, what should I make?"

"Let's see... I'm going to use the camping pot, so can you put together a hanger?"

She just needs to bind together some of our firewood with a rope, so it probably won't take that long.

For the cooking fire, we had a portable Fire Crystal, so there was no problem.

The portable Fire Crystal, unlike those at home, are throwaway items usable once.

If you traced the cavity in the stone looking like the character for fire, it would gradually heat up and ignite.

I've heard in this world with a low absolute number of magi, they were used for military purposes, too.

Well, military-use Fire Crystals probably didn't give off cheap, weak flames like this one.

"The camping pot? Are you going to stir something? Or did you want cook rice?"

In fact, the camping pot could also be function as a frying pan. It was such an excellent portable cookware, but I was not going to make anything fried.

And just like Ilya's confused expression said, we had not packed any rice.

"I'm going to make a soup," I answered and dragged the ingredients and flavorings off the carriage.

I had Ilya build the hanger for the camping pot, heated everything up with the Fire Crystal and firewood and made a simple soup in the camping pot.

As expected there was nothing handy like a ready-made soup base, so I used the consomme I had used for cooking the other day, too, and salt for flavoring. With beans and cabbage, the ingredients were simplistic.

I tried tasting it, but my tired body was penetrated by the saltiness.

I beat the jerky a bit to soften it and used it for sandwiches along with the salad I had brought.

We would use up all our vegetables in a day, but whatever.

They wouldn't get any better.

But it really helped that the foodstuffs were just what they looked like. There was no need for me to hesitate when cooking.

"Ohh, this is good!"

The soup accompanied by sandwiches was met with a favorable reception.

That one line was the real pleasure of cooking.

"Really... and it makes the bread so easy to swallow, too."

With only solid foods... right?

Besides, we were outdoors, something to warm us up was great.

"I am sorry, it really should have been me to prepare it... but Alice-sama seemed to enjoy herself so much..."

"Eh? D-did I?"

No, well, certainly cooking is great change your mood.

"One has taken a liking to this, Alice! Well done!"

"No, uhm... thank you."

Somehow I'm only being praised for things outside of training...

Still, damn she's cute when she's gobbling up a sandwich.

Not that I would ever say it; she'd kill me.

"So, how far did thy Proficiency rise?"

"Until 51."

I worked quite hard.

"Hoh. Then it shouldn't take much longer."

Nono, I just finally came back.

This is the place for 'It'll really take until freaking dawn', you know?

"If thou have exceeded 50, thou should already be able to target an area with it. With thy mana, one strike should still suffice for the likes of the enemies there."

"Area!?"

I hurriedly checked Thunder.

Thunder (Proficiency 51) No Cast Time, 10s Cooldown, Area possible

Oh...Area... possible?

"In that case, it really might not take all night."

"It doesn't hurt getting used to nocturnal combat, either. Alice! Thy eyes can see, too, right?"

About elven eyes, huh.

"I can. As I thought, you too, right, Till?

"Yes. And the dragon lass should be skilled at reading presences. It's good to further train it via nocturnal combat."

Ilya strongly nodded.

Ahh, that wolf's surprise attack still bothered her.

Although for me, it had been a fortuitous mistake.

Thanks to it, I had noticed a neat little trick.

"Then do thy best. One is going to sleep."

"You really sleep a lot."

Just like the child she looks like!?

As if drowsiness had shown itself the moment her stomach was filled with sandwiches and soup, Till rubbed her eyes.

287, huh?

"... come on, Till. Please sleep properly in the tent."

I took Till's hand who had started dozing off right then and there.

Her steps were uncertain, too.

By her hand, I guided her to the tent.

We entered and right after I pulled the blanket over her, she fell asleep.

"She has the sleeping face of an angel, though..."

Sheesh, I wanted to sleep, too, but as the disciple, I couldn't do that.

For the moment, I decided to clean up after the meal, take a little bath and go out again.

When I came back to Ilya, she had finished dinner, too, and had begun the clean-up.

"Ilya, when we're done cleaning up, I'm going to bathe a little in the lake, so please give me just a little bit of time for that."

"No, Alice-sama. During the bath you are the most unguarded; we have no idea what danger might lurk there. I shall accompany you."

"... eh?"

She'll come with me?

"Uhm... your clothes?"

"Even without wearing a single shred, I shall not fall behind any enemy."

"I-is that so."

Well, she can stop a sword with her bare arm.

But, no, that's not where the problem lay.

"Now, let us go."

"Ah, wai-"

While talking, Ilya quickly finished cleaning up and now pulled me by the arm.

She took towels from our luggage and dragged me along.

You're so strong, Ilya!

I was no match at all.

I had already resigned myself.

And embarrassingly, my eyes worked really well at night...

Their distance

This world had two moons.

One blue, one red.

The way the blue moon seemed to chase the red moon around in the sky, like they were close siblings frolicking around, made me smile.

"The twin moons Klayne and Krysna. I find them very beautiful tonight, without any clouds.

"Yeah, it's calming my heart..."

So they were named Klayne and Krysna.

Well, put frankly they were moons.

Somehow it seemed like there'd be a story behind it.

But it really was a mysterious scenery.

When I had moved to the city, I had slowly forgotten to look up to the sky because I hadn't been able to see the stars anyway, but this world's nature is really mysterious and wonderful.

No, well, that's the same in my former world, but it depended on where you were.

In that sense, where I am right now really is wonderful.

"Alice-sama, doesn't——your neck hurt?"

"A little."

Unnaturally looking up at the sky for a long time did make my body feel uncomfortable after all, it seems.

I understood Ilya coming closer from the sound of the water.

"W-why are you coming closer, Ilya?"

"Well, my movements are not quick, Alice-sama, so I thought I should be as close as possible to become your shield."

Ilya... you're such a good girl!

But right now, I don't need your concern!

"This lake has few stones and the soft sand feels nice. Is the water temperature alright for you?"

Come to think of it, it really was nice how there was no sludge on the ground.

I'd thought it would suck to accidentally cut my leg, but like this, it might be okay to walk around a bit.

"It's not that cold, so I'm fine. Wanna go under a bit? Like, splash?"

I'd finally had enough and turned around to Ilya to mess with her a bit.

My eyes were locked to her face, though.

Still, Ilya wet from the lake water made an amazing picture.

Illuminated by the moonlight, it wasn't too much to called her a faery.

"You are so very beautiful."

"...eh?"

"The word may be used a lot, but Alice-sama, I feel there is no necessity to use other words."

"T-thank you."

Suddenly being told the word that had gone through my head made me feel like she'd read my heart.

Ahh, she'd surprised me.

Something about Ilya gave you the impression she might.

"But I shall dare say it."

...you are?

"Your bewitching hair glittering in the moonlight is beautiful like the silver flowers blooming in the village of the faeries. I could lose myself in your clear golden eyes are the very jewels of amber, which they say was brought from the savage lands by the god-dragon. In addition to the alluring strength in those eyes, your face is so fair that it fascinates me, of the same

gender, as does your well-balanced body. Alice-sama, you are akin to a goddess sent by the gods."

"...i-is that so? Somehow, sorry."

Sorry, for cheating.

What's this, her praise makes my heart hurt.

Furthermore, digging up legends handed down in this world to praise me, that's embarrassing!

"——but the most beautiful aspect of you, Alice-sama, is your beautiful heart."

"..."

"My, you do not believe me?"

Seeing my dumbfounded face, Ilya laughed impishly.

I was pleasantly surprised.

I'd only seen her refined conduct, but she could also smile cutely like that, befitting her age.

"It is as clear as day to me. It may be boasting, but——that is my magic."

"——Ha-hahaha!"

What is this. Ilya is polite, beautiful, reliable, docile... and just a little bit distant.

——of course, if I had to say if I liked or disliked her, I like her.

Even more than before.

"Ilya, that's what you're like?"

"Yes, that's what I'm like."

"Hehe."

The somewhat proudly smiling Ilya was so funny I couldn't hold in the giggle.

"Ahh, this feels so nice. Alright, time to go splash."

I let myself fall backwards into the water just like that.

There was a little splash, but my body seems really light, so it really wasn't that big.

"Cold!"

However, submerging my whole body in the water really was a bit chilly.

"Then, me too."

Next to me, Ilya let herself fall just like me.

Ilya didn't make that big a splash, either, but because she did it right next to me, I got the full brunt of it.

"Wawa, you're getting water all over me! Come on... ahaha!"

"I got caught up in the moment just a little bit. Hehe, I'm deeply sorry, Alice-sama."

The two of us floated in the lake, under the light of the moon.

With this sensation of becoming one with nature, no impure thoughts came up.

"Ilya, be honest with me. ——do you want to be set free?"

"No, not at all."

Her reply was instant.

"Are you being considerate?"

"Do you think I am?"

"I might be."

"My? Hehe, Alice-sama, you are not reading the mood."

"Let's say I can't and am troubled by it every day?"

Mood? What's that?

"I really want to live with you forever, Alice-sama," Ilya replied with just a little bit of seriousness in her voice.

"As the honored mentor said, I want to believe that my meeting you was my fate, Alice-sama. That is my answer, including my lowly personal desires."

That talk, that she had with Till.

I see.

"So you have ulterior motives?"

"Yes. Are you disillusioned?"

"No, I'm rather relieved."

Isn't that much more human, rather than being the object of a loyalty for unknown reasons?

Being with me has some kind of merit for Ilya.

——Or it might in the future.

That's how it is."I think having human flaws is important, you know?"

"Alice-sama..."

I hold out my hand, as if to grasp the moon.

Human hearts are vague and difficult to grasp. But forcing it, or not trying it at all, are both no good.

Well, finding the right measure is difficult.

But in that respect, reading the mood is not all there is to interacting with people.

"I am really glad to have... eh, this presence!?"

Ilya's whisper turned into surprise and she jumped up.

I looked around for what had surprised her, but there was nothing.

Only the sound from the water as Ilya had jumped up penetrated the silence.

And still, Ilya warily looked around.

Was she reflecting on the event at noon?

Sheesh, Ilya, you're so serious.

"Ilya?"

The moment I tried to get up, too, someone grabbed my arm.

Hm?

Who?

"...?"

I looked at my stretched-out arm.

Something like an squid's arm coming from the water surface was wrapped all around it.

"Hiiii!"

Disgusting!?

"Alice-sama!? My carelessness!!"

The moment I noticed it, I was dragged away from the shore with incredible force.

Ilya who had been right next to me had quickly grabbed my other arm and was dragged along.

"Wa-, just when we were at the good paaart!"

Forget the emergency situation: Read the mood already, you damn squid monster!!

In no time at all, Ilya and I were drawn near the middle of the lake and then under water.

"Uwah! It's under water!?"

"Take a deep breath, Alice-sama!"

As per advice, I took a deep breath before my face was submerged.

I could hear the water like a buzz in my ears.

Underwater was like yet another world.

It had yet another stillness than silent air.

This silence made the ears hurt, but that might be my eardrums bursting from water pressure!

If we got drawn too deeply, it'd be bad!

Level 15 Lake Sepia

My elven eyes found the enemy lurking at the bottom of the lake.

Even with little light, I could see it.

It looked like an archetypical invertebrate with a number of tentacles.

Its leg which was wrapped around my arm had suckers and no matter how much I tried, I couldn't pull it off.

The two protruding eyes with which it stared at us left no blind spots.

Its appearance was just like that thing.

You know...

It's a squid!

Such a naming fraud!

No, well, at the moment nothing of that matters though.

If I didn't do something quickly, we'd drown before the enemy could do anything to us.

"——!"

Ilya was still trying hard to separate the tentacle from my arm.

I also didn't feel like dying, but the bigger my trouble became, the more danger I'd expose Ilya to.

But it would still be foolish to shoot Thunder here, under water.

It might be alright since it's magic lightning, but I really didn't want to electrify myself.

But the longer I hesitated, the more time went to waste.

The tentacles dragged us towards the huge mouth opening at the bottom of the monster's belly.

... come to think of it, golden cuttlefish were carnivores, weren't they?

Apparently I was calm enough to think something so unimportant.

Well, I could only test it in a situation leaving no room for failure, but I wasn't unable to do it.

I had grasped the sensation.

And I had no intention of obediently becoming squid food.

"——"

I tapped Ilya, who was still grappling with the tentacle around my arm, on the shoulder and shook my head.

And with my free arm, I pointed above.

——surface before me.

It should have gotten across.

Ilya was grimly shaking her head, but no, no.

I'm not the way anymore I was against the Ice Dragon.

I gave Ilya a serious look.

She looked perplexed, but after hesitating for a few seconds, she strongly nodded and began rising to the surface.

Alright.

Now I only had to...

"——NGG!"

Hurts!

Certainly there was no time to waste on composure.

I grabbed the tentacle wrapped around my left arm with my right hand.

I had limited the way I was using too much to begin with.

The first culture shock that had overturned that had been that magic of Till's.

A single idea held a bunch of possibilities.

So I'll show you what I can do with it! Eat that!

"___"

I activated magic from my right hand and directly poured it into my enemies body.

A cornered rat with bite that cat.

The monster, which had looked down on me as simple prey, raged under my attack.

But regulating it was still difficult for me.

But that could be my homework in the future.

Like it was throwing me away, the monster let go of my arm and I quickly started surfacing.

"Ng, ng!!"

Crapcrap!

The moment I relaxed, the anguish suddenly doubled.

Quickly!

The surface! Quicklly!

"Haaaah!"

I broke through the water surface with speed and sucked the air into my lungs with all my strength.

Just how delicious can air be!

"Alice-sama!" Ilya called out to me in relief and swam over.

Alright, next!

"Ilya, grab on to me!

"Eh? O-okay!"

She didn't seem to understand my plan, but it's wonderful how well she could respond to changing situations.

And your body feels wonderful, too... Ilya.

Nono!

The monster wasn't defeated yet, so if we stayed here we'd only repeat what happened earlier.

And there was no guarantee that the monster would be as negligent the next time it attacked.

In that case——I'd jump all the way to the shore!

"Watch my magic! Till!!"

I suddenly challenged my mentor.

Putting my right hand on the water surface, I regulated my magic.

——that being said, of course I couldn't do minute adjustments.

We just had to fly all the way to the shore!

"——this is?"

Ilya peeked at the light of mana gathering in my right hand full of interest.

It slowly got stronger and——

"GOOO!"

Like it was exploding, it turned into propulsive power.

From the repellent force, Ilya and I were flung out of the water.

With rather amazing force, we flew through the sky towards the land with our tent.

"T-this is amazing! Alice-sama! We're flying!"

"Right!? Right!?"

Although to be exact, we'd only been thrown into the air...

"Do you know of the electric jellyfish?"

"Jellyfish?"

"Well, don't mind, then."

It had been quite the repellent force.

Ilya cocked her head with just a bit of wonderment.

And then, she looked like something had clicked for her.

"Ehm... By the way, how are we going to land?"

The air seemed to freeze.

The very hard-looking ground came closer and closer.

Crap, at this rate it's a direct course to minced meat for us!

I could try the same trick one more time to cancel our descent, but right now, I decided to go with a better bet.

Right, I decided to call for my final trump.

I'd decided to do so since the beginning, okay?

With a composed smile on my face, I looked at Ilya.

"I leave that to you, Ilya."

"Hehe. *Yes, Milady.*"

Changing our posture, she held me in the princess carry I had gotten completely used to by now.

Our high momentum was dangerous, so I laid my arms around Ilya's neck and held on tight.

And then, our eyes inadvertently met.

There was nothing artificial about it.

And Ilya somehow felt closer to me than before.

"——"

While we were caught in each other's eyes, Ilya broke into a little smile.

Then she whispered something and we were covered by a green light.

That was... what she had done against the Ice Dragon?

I looked down, and there was the ground.

"!"

As expected, I stiffened.

But.

Contrary to my expectation, the shock wasn't that strong.

Although we had landed with amazing momentum.

Or I should rather say, we had crashed.

Usually, we'd had enough momentum to end up dead for sure.

Was it thanks to the green membrane?

In fact, the ground had been gouged out a few meters by the light orb around us.

"Are you alright? Milady?"

"Y-yes... just surprised."

In this world, people don't die when they fall from the sky.

I learn something new every day.

The green light disappeared and I had Ilya put me down.

And not a second later, water rose by the lake shore and the squid showed itself.

"And here I went out of my way to let you off!"

If it wanted it that way, I wouldn't go easy.

This time the tentacles didn't come to capture, but whipped through the air to smash us to pieces.

Ilya stepped forward and stopped them cold.

"——Split the heavens and become a ray of light, to strike my enemies! Thunder!"

With chanted magic from my right hand, I pierced the squid.

The reaction was enough.

Like foam, the squid melted and disappeared.

There was a drop item.

——Squid Ink.

"...what natural enemies does it have in a lake?"

The mysteries of fantasy kept deepening.

——The following is a certain other event from such a night.

"——well done, stupid disciple."

Somewhat happy-sounding like that, someone said praise into the night.

The thoughts of the mentor watching everything from beginning to end from the skies above the lake.

The two people who had dried themselves off to not catch a cold and were having a friendly chat while warming up at a fire noticed nothing of it, though.

"Now then, time for one to sleep for real."

With a long yawn, she began moving through the sky like going down the stairs.

Suddenly, she looked at her own magic.

"One's own magic, huh. Sheesh, that greenhorn."

Contrary to her words, her heart was elated.

"Hmm, what punishment should one give her if she can't raise the proficiency to 99 by morning..."

Those exceedingly happy words disappeared into the night sky.

Rufin

The sun rose again after that all too eventful day and it turned noon.

Finally we reached the town we'd stop by.

Size-wise, it might be the same as Rinnal?

Being closer to the royal capital, it seemed livelier from the distance.

I wonder how much of the way we have behind us?

Yesterday, we've traveled from morning until after noon.

Today, we've traveled from morning once more until noon.

It was only the three of us on the carriage, so even with our luggage we should've been quite fast.

We'd mostly stuck to the main roads, too.

But from looking at it, we're still lucky if the carriage makes ten kph. Well, if you also consider the breaks...

We've come for about a hundred kilometers.

A hundred, huh...

I spontaneously turned around on the carriage and looked in the direction we came from.

"Onee-chan..."

What is this, I wonder, there's this strong pain in my chest...

When I am strong...

Strong enough to not lose to anyone on my own, strong enough to protect everyone, is it okay to return to that town?

"Haha, even when coming to another world I didn't feel homesick..."

"Nn... Alice-sama."

Ilya, who had been lightly sleeping against my shoulder, woke up.

She'd fallen asleep there before I noticed it, so I'd just left her like that.

It had consoled me a bit, too.

"Ah... I am deeply sorry."

Grasping the situation, Ilya straightened herself in a fluster.

"Don't mind it. I know being rocked like this makes you mysteriously sleepy."

I had thought the ride would be more uncomfortable, but it really didn't shake that much, this carriage.

Besides, we'd been up all night...

"But while you are awake, Alice-sama..."

"I... was thinking a little."

"How disappointing of me..."

Ilya is serious, so she's awkward about this.

Would it be my job as her master to scold her here?

Alright~

"Then I'll punish you."

"Y-yes."

Why does she look a little bit happy?

"Show me your forehead."

"?"

"This is an ancient and honorable punishment from my birthplace."

"I-is that so?"

"Indeed, prepare yourself."

"Yes."

Ilya closed her eyes and turned her forehead toward me.

Forgive me, Ilya.

I bent the middle finger of my right hand, laid it against the thumb and pushed outside."

Take this——Forehead Flick!

With a snapping sound, my attack hit Ilya's forehead!

I didn't flick her too hard, did I?

For a moment, I felt I had overdone it.

But this is also a master's duty.

They're bitter, these acts of evil...

"Ehm... are you going to do something?"

"...eh?"

"Eh?"

Not knowing what had happened, Ilya opened her eyes after hearing my brainless reaction.

What... did she say?

Is the wall I have to overcome so high it doesn't even allow for little pranks like this?

The separation between Strength 0 and Protection 5!

"...you are already reflecting enough. Only a fool would add a punishment on top. That's how it is."

"Alice-sama..."

I tried to interpret it a bit coolly.

Ilya stared at me with innocent eyes.

"——damn fool."

"..."

There was a person who had seen through everything on the coachman's bench.

Leaving the carriage at the outskirts, we checked into the inn first.

It was a typical inn, a three-floor building with a combination of dining hall and bar on the first.

I think it's going to be alright, but if they're noisy at night the third floor would be good.

When I told to old guy from the inn, he laughed carefreely and accepted my request.

A three person room came at 450 Rook.

150 Rook per person.

Well, it came with food so the price was appropriate.

We paid with five silver coins and got fifty copper coins as change.

Every place had a special frame for change. You threw coins in there and it had markers for ten coins, twenty coins, thirty... Like that, you could easily count the change.

A coin counter.

Well, you obviously couldn't count the coins one by one.

Even without paper money, doing it like this came with surprisingly little discomfort.

Still, did the royal capital have not enough influence to make paper money?

Or was it a problem of technology?

Anyhow, after smoothly checking in, we fetched our luggage and went up to the third floor.

And after getting into our room and putting down or stuff...

"One will be heading out. We will be staying three nights, do as you like in the meantime," Till said, so we saw her off.

And what about my practice?

For now, my Thunder had reached proficiency 99.

As for what's changed, the cooldown has halved.

That meant I could use it with more energy efficiency.

Whether its power has changed, I don't know.

It's just, lately I've keenly felt just how important that energy conservation actually is.

If I start panting every time I fight someone a little strong and it draws out a little bit, I can't ever be the strongest.

"Now then."

I took a good look at the three beds next to another.

The room was wider than expected.

That being said, due to the three beds it still ended up narrow.

Still, hotel rooms with three beds had been rare in my original world, too.

In tatami rooms you could spread out futons and give any number of people room for the night, though.

But well, let's leave the impressions of the room for later.

"For now, let's sleep," I declared to Ilya and decided to honor Till's instruction.

Free time, YAY!

When I woke up, the evening sun was alright shining in through the window.

When I looked around the room, I noticed Ilya had put a chair next to my bed and was sitting there motionlessly.

"Ilya?"

"You have awoken, Alice-sama?"

Don't tell me, all the time she's been...?

When I looked at her curiously, she returned a cheerful smile.

"Sorry, Ilya, I should've told you you're free to do as you like, too."

I had clearly intended to do so, but I suppose for a slave is a problem if the the master leaves it at the intention.

"Hehe, I could watch your sleeping face forever, Alice-sama. I considered pinching your nose a little."

"So you are angry."

"I wonder?"

"Come on..."

She was quite the mischievous slave.

"I was joking, Alice-sama."

But when she laughs like that, she's cute.

"But during your sleep-talking, I was a bit jealous."

"Eh?"

Had I said something?

Ilya formed a troubled smile and shook her head, saying it was nothing.

For the time being, I got up and stretched.

My sleep deprivation was gone and I felt refreshed.

"Till?"

"Has not returned yet."

What was she doing?

She had quite a lot of secrets.

Oh, well.

"It looks like it's just the right time. Let's go have dinner."

"Yes."

Ilya was a slave, but she slept where and ate what I did, of course.

I've already told her so.

For example, what if I kicked her out of this inn for the three nights and some strange man attacked her?

No... uhh, leaving the result that she'd take him apart in return aside.

What I want to say is that if that happened, it would just increase my mental burden so it's pointless.

It's important for Ilya to be by my side, so I'll not unnecessarily treat her like a slave.

In the beginning she did show reserve, but as a result of my persuasion, she relented.

It was fine like that.

"By the way, how's this town called?"

"We are in the town of Rufin."

Rufin, huh...

What was it this time?

Going out would be annoying, so we decided to do the quick and easy thing and get food in the dining hall on the first floor.

We could always go for a walk after dinner.

Seeing the special of the day we ordered, I couldn't help but think of fried chicken.

Seeing the salad coming with it, I thought they should stop putting the dressing on beforehand, I like it better without.

While getting those impressions, I enjoyed dinner with Ilya until——

"YOU BASTARD!!" someone shouted loud enough to make the bustling dining hall fall silent. Two men were having a fight.

What? What?

At a closer look, they were boys rather than men?

They seemed younger than Blackie, which made them around my age, maybe?

Their fistfight began escalating while a girl, again around the same age, tried to stop them.

"A love triangle, huh..."

"They are that age, Alice-sama."

After arriving at that conclusion in an instant, we started eating again.

We didn't care.

But speaking of which, just how would my love affairs turn out?

Is it okay for me to like girls?

Is it not?

If it's not, then...?

"...the thought gives me goosebumps. Thank god, I'm still normal."

"?"

I'll protect it, this mindset.

"You! You said you loved Cyra! And yet you want to hit on that woman? What's wrong with you!"

Oh, he totally pointed at me.

"The fight's spreading, Ilya."

"It cannot be helped, Alice-sama. It is your fault for being too beautiful."

But even if Ilya tells me so...

"——hold it, boys," a man sitting at the counter, apparently drinking alcohol, called the boys to a stop. His voice rung awfully clear through the noise.

It sounded impressive enough to suddenly gather the eyes of all the eaters.

The man looked like an adventurer with the longsword on his back.

When I turned around to him, he was rather handsome.

While I was just observing the events, our eyes met.

He winked at me.

Ahh, like a foreigner.

Although we're in another world.

Just let me eat my fried chicken.

"Before you punch it out in a bar like this, booze is the perfect appetizer! How about it! If you're men, show some guts already!" the man heartily slammed the mug he had drunk from onto the counter and smiled daringly.

Challenging minors to a drinking bout, is this guy going to be alright?

Although there might be no such regulation in the first place.

And when do you become an adult anyway?

"Hm, fine. I grew up in this town! If it's a drinking match with lufin wine, I can lose even less."

"...no objections from me. If I win, I won't let anyone interfere with who I fall for."

The surrounding people had changed into spectators in the blink of an eye.

They easily went with the mood.

"By the way, Ilya, what is lufin?"

Eh?

That's what her face said. Ilya pointed at the dessert coming with the food.

"These fruits. They are this town's special product. If you press the fruits and ferment what you get, you get an alcoholic drink."

"Isn't that..."

...grapes!

Waitwait!

How can you move a hundred kilometers from the town of rinnal and get to grapes as a specialty product?

Or is the difference in altitude big enough to make that work?

Just what's going on with this world's climate...

"Bring on the big mugs!"

On the other hand, the other guys were getting fired up more and more.

Come to think of it, I don't know if I can take my liquor or not.

That needs finding out.

"Ilya, may I drink something, too?"

"I think it will be fine. I think you will be very cute when you're drunk, Milady."

"No... I wonder."

Isn't this the time when I have to display a manly drinking manner?

Shouldn't I assert my manliness sometimes?

Well, in the worst case, even if I get smashed I have a reliable partner by my side.

"——I'll treat you!"

At some point, the handsome guy had put down the big mug he had just ordered on our table.

What's with this natural and mature consideration?

When I looked up at the man loitering next to me, I got a good smile in return.

His teeth were pure white.

Hmm...

"You're not going to make me drink alone, are you?"

"What, you're game?"

The handsome guy used his free hand to imitate drinking from a mug.

The corners of my mouth lifted.

"You're on."

Like this, we lit the fuse to a match a man definitely couldn't lose.

Tipsy

Lufin wine was sweet and easy to drink.

Its fresh fragrance tickled the nose, it reminded a bit of pure fruit juice.

But it had a good amount of alcohol, blending that adult taste into it.

It appeared to be extremely popular among women, and yeah, with that taste I could really understand that.

And as a fruit wine, it didn't have the bitterness of beer, either.

"Ahh, this is pretty good," I splendidly emptied my mug in one go and ordered another from the staff.

"You're good yourself, missy, but I can't let you beat me."

Seeing me drink, the handsome guy increased his own drinking pace to catch up to me.

So~~mehow I can see ulterior motives there.

Don't think you can do whatever you like with me even if I get smashed!

"Would you not say drinking while judging the state of a lady is unmanly? ——or did you have some inappropriate thoughts?"

With quite an amazing smile, Ilya warned the handsome guy.

Ah, a beauty glaring at you is intense...

"Heh, don't rush me, we're just warming up, right, Misses?

The handsome guy was rather bold, it seemed.

Please look after me, Ilya.

"——still, a match is a bore if we don't bet something, like those boys over there."

I could see a vein pop on Ilya's temple.

She was still smiling, but...

"...what would you have in mind?"

"Heh, nothing much. If I win, the miss here and I spend the n-woah."

"Hahh? Did you say something?"

Ilya-san, if you stab knives at people's hands, you might cut off some fingers, you know?

Ilya was smiling after she stabbed the knife from the food between the handsome guy's fingers.

Nono, that's scary, okay!

"Wow, that's scary, blond Miss."

Indeed.

"Well, calm down. I like the women, but I'm no monster. A date in the evening is all I want. How about that?"

That show-off winked again.

It looked quite catching, so I couldn't laugh.

"I refuse."

But it looks like it didn't work on Ilya.

"You're a tough one! Hey, how about you, silver Miss? We're talking about you here?"

While they were talking, I had emptied another big mug.

This is so nice...

"Ahh~, this might be delicious.... eh? Ah, a date? Ah, having fun, right? Sure~"

"Alice-sama!!"

I wonder what she has, I'm in a great mood here...

"Hyahaha, you get it, Miss."

In high spirits, the handsome guy also ordered his second mug.

"Then if I win~, you're going to settle the bills for everyone here tonight, okay~"

Whooooooo, the people around us cheered.

I answered by waving back.

What is this~, I'm in a good mood~

"H-hoh? You sure know how to play the game, silver Miss? Sounds fun, I'm in!"

With the terms clear, the handsome guy's eyes turned serious.

His cheek muscles seemed to be twitching, though.

Anyhow, he looked motivated.

His eyes were glittering.

We daringly glared at each other.

Next to us, Ilya seemed upset for some reason.

"...hey, blond Miss."

"Yes?"

"Humans can smile like that?"

"It would seem so."

Next to me, Ilya and the handsome guy were talking.

What is that all about?

"Ahahahaha! What's with you, you keep your hat on even inside? Ahahaha!"

"This is my style! Hey, silver Miss, aren't you drinking too much!? Are you alright!? Uargs"

With a pale face, the handsome guy held his mouth.

Wimp. He should've had two mugs less than me...

"Well, ignoring who is more smashed, the match is decided, is it it not?"

"Ridiculous, this is... I... against such a Miss? Uargs."

"Is it not?"

Pressured by Ilya, the handsome guy nodded while he kept moaning.

"Urg... a man doesn't go back on his word. I just need to pay, alright? Alright?"

"Ahahaha, have you heard that, guys~~?"

Whoooooow, the cheers rose again.

"You heard the lady! Eat more~! Drink more~! Today, everything's that dude's treat!"

It turned into a hearty revelry.

Ahhhh, what is this, I feel really good...

Wait?

Ilya, what's with you? You look so kyeewt...

"Ilya, come on~ you're not gonna drink with me~?"

"If I drink as well, the wolves around us will get wrong ideas."

"Hmm? I don't really get it, but well, alright."

Still, this is boring~

Having nobody to drink with is boring~

Ah?

There's someone good~

Let's go~

——The case of Takeshi

"Damn, my head's killing me... shit."

"Don't drink with such a depressing face."

First, I headed to the boy who had lit the fuse to the drinking matches.

It looks like he's drunk quite a bit, but he's lost to the other one over there.

I think the other one said he'd chat me up in case he won, but the girl was considerately keeping him company.

Hah, this is beyond hope...

"Woah, who are you!?"

"Oh shut up, Takeshi. You sure you're alright with losing to him?"

"Who's Takeshi! I've never even heard the name!?"

Apparently getting talked back to with a frown comes with some pressure.

"Who cares about names."

"That's way too arbitrary! Ouc-, shit, my head rings..."

"Pathetic, you're really pathetic. Won or lost, you're beyond hope. Are you stupid? You think that's cool?"

I think if Takeshi had won, he'd have gone out with that girl, was it?

Oh, well, who cares about the details..

"Shaddup. What would a woman know of my feelings!"

"Hah, you can't win, drown your worries in booze and bother strangers with them. Of course she won't look at you then."

"Damn you!"

He vigorously reached for my collar to draw me up——and stopped as Ilya lay her knife against his throat.

"Whoa!?"

Ilya's so cute~~

"If you have this much energy, then direct it at her."

"What?!"

"Have you ever told that girl your feelings?"

"...but... Cyra likes him..."

Takeshi visibly faltered.

I took a big gulp from my mug.

Ilya's face looked a bit displeased.

"But you still like her, don't you?"

"!"

"There's no guarantee. But it'll never be over like this, will it? Your love."

Ah, come to think of it, back when I was in the soccer club, I get the feeling I'd been asked for advice like this a lot.

I'd listened to people's worries so much it had tired me out.

I still couldn't leave them alone though.

"Have some courage. And if it's still no good... I'll join you when you drink your worries away again."

I made an encouraging, good smile.

"Sis..."

Sis?

Oh, who cares.

——The case of Kenji

When Takeshi had formed some sort of resolve, the other boy had shaken off the girl and moved to a seat at the counter.

"You drinking, Kenji?"

"Kenji...?"

He looked at me quizzically when I sat down next to him.

"Oh, you..."

"Weren't you going to chat me up if you won the match?"

"..."

"Heh, I know, you used me as an excuse. You're also quite the pussy."

"What would you know about it!"

He hadn't done anything in particular, but Ilya was warningly knocking her knife's grip against the counter.

It made a pretty good sound.

The faces of the staff cramped, though.

"Dunno. You think keeping quiet and running away is manly?"

"!"

"Are her feelings or your feelings ever going to settle if you're acting that vague?"

I ordered the next big mug from the old guy at the counter.

Ilya seemed about to cry.

"I'm an outsider, so in the end whatever I say is irresponsible. If I were in your shoes, I'd probably be lost, too. But you know," I stopped for a moment and smiled at the boorish Kenji. "If those two are important to you, then treat them with your utmost sincerity. Otherwise you'll regret it."

"You're..."

Kenji looked like a weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

"Sorry.... you're right. You're a good woman, Sis."

Sis?

"Have a good love, Kenji."

I raised the mug in my hand for a toast.

...hm?

By the way, what am I doing here?

When I returned to the table we'd been at in the beginning, I patted the handsome guy sitting there with his head hanging, on the back.

"Owouch! Wait, no? Wait, what are you doing, silver Miss!"

"Why so gloomy? Thanks to you, at least those two boys' mood has cleared!"

"Hahh? And your tone...?"

The handsome guy quizzically looked at Ilya.

Ilya shook her head in exasperation.

"Sometimes, relaxing like this is fine, too..."

"S-sure?"

I took one coin from the leather bag hanging at my waist.

I flicked it onto the table.

"It's been a blast. If this isn't enough for everyone's tabs, you pay the rest."

"A g-gold..."

A noticeably loud cheer arose around us.

Without turning towards them, I say bye and waved as I left, my back toward them.

Instead, Ilya made a proper bow, though.

"Sis... you're so cool."

Sis?

I left the dining hall in a pretty good mood.

——The next day

The moment I woke up, I was assaulted by a furious headache.

"My head hurts... what's... going on..."

"..."

Ilya looked at me with a difficult mien. Why is it you don't answer me!?

"Did she do something, dragon lass?" Till, who had returned at some point, looked at me through half-opened eyes.

Just what had happened to me!?

"It was nothing of importance, but... I believe it would be better for Milady to abstain from drinking."

I didn't catch the latter half properly, but Till nodded exasperatedly.

"One will head out again. You at least make the dragon lass's class-up," Till said and strode out of the room.

Her harshness kinda makes her cute, that Till...

"Mmm... I wonder when we have to checkout. If we stay another two nights in this room, maybe we should make reservations already."

I took the coins from the leather bag on the shelf.

"Hm? Isn't there a gold coin missing...?"

"...you are imagining things, Milady."

"I-I do? If you say so, Ilya."

This is weird...

Anyway, my head hurts and I can't think properly.

"Sorry, Ilya. May I lay down for a while?"

"Of course, Alice-sama. Should I bring you some water?"

"Yes, please."

"Hehe, as I thought. I like this Alice-sama."

"Eh?"

"But that one really is..."

For some reason Ilya blushed. Then she quickly got up from her chair to get water.

"That one?"

I don't really get it, but there's a lot for us to do today.

As Till said, Ilya's class-up is indispensable if we're thinking about the future.

We need to quickly find the Ruins around here and get it done with.

If it's Ilya and I as we are now, there's no way we can't make it.

Also, I want to take an easy job from the Guild here.

Have to pay traveling expenses.

Besides, leaving aside whether I buy it or not, I need new equipment.

I picked up the Lightning Rod at my bedside.

"Since it's cracked, I guess I can't use it anymore..."

In fact, when I had recklessly gone out on my own and thrust it into the mouth of that bear, it seems the lightning jewel cracked and it doesn't give off lightning strikes anymore.

With that, in combat it's nothing but a wooden stick.

No matter how much I mainly fight with magic, it's still harsh.

"But I still don't want to throw it away..."

I gently put the rod back and sighed.

Either way, there's a lot to do.

It wasn't the time to remain in bed.

But thinking really made my head hurt...

"Here, Alice-sama."

Ilya came back with just the right timing.

"Ah, thanks."

While being healed by Ilya's smile, I took the glass and drank.

Escort Quest

After booking the room for the following nights, too, it was afternoon when Ilya and I finally went out.

It turned so late because my headache just wouldn't get better.

We headed out after I had a light lunch in the dining hall on the first floor.

...now, that lunch.

I don't know why, but when I ordered some of the customers seemed scared and some people looking like regulars cheered. There was no end to the mysteries, but Ilya didn't say anything so I decided not to think anything of it.

Actually, the customers weren't afraid of me but Ilya?

Really, what happened there?

"Ilya, speaking of yesterday..."

Hmm?

I remember dinner, but nothing thereafter. Whatever happened there?

I have some fuzzy memories of someone starting an argument and that handsome guy mediating, but...

"Uhm... didn't I do something weird?"

"No, Alice-sama, you were beautiful as always and very cool."

"Cool...?"

What?

That's the first time I was told that since I was reborn into this body.

...oh, well.

I'm busy today, it's not the place to keep mulling that forever.

"Let's head to the Guild first."

For now, we should work.

On the way to the guild, I got the feeling that this Lufin was prospering more than Rinnal after all.

By carriage, they were only a day's travel apart, but if you looking at a map, Rinnal was certainly remote and no halfway point to some place further out.

In short, if you didn't have business in Rinnal, you didn't go there.

In comparison, this Lufin connected the royal capital in the south, Rinnal in the north and towns to the east and west to boot. You could call it a blessed town, location-wise.

That's why there were many travelers of all kinds of races.

Actually, when I spotted a girl with dog ears, I stared for a while.

Ilya admonished me for it, though.

Yes, you must not undress people with your eyes.

All those went through my head while I looked at the map leaning against a wall in the Guild.

To be honest, if the map were a little bigger I could've found out more about this world, but it was a local map so what can you do.

"Looking at this, it's about 3 days by carriage to the capital? That's a bit far, isn't it."

"Indeed. We need to settle your business today, Alice-sama, and use tomorrow to prepare for the journey."

Preparing for a journey, huh.

It seems like if I don't properly calculate our expenses, we're going to run into some huge problem midway.

But even saying so, well, it's only three days so I guess it's nothing to get that nervous over.

Speaking of which, I looked at Ilya.

We were about to head out adventuring, so she had equipped her leather robe and her iron spear, but Ilya apart from this and the one set of service clothes she had worn at the Firm, she had no clothes.

I had easily gotten changes of clothes from Aunty and bought what I lacked in Rinnal.

Not thinking about Ilya then was my fault indeed.

Won't I be a failure of a master if I leave it like this?

"Ilya, let's go shopping for clothes tomorrow. For you, of course."

"There is no... no, thank you very much, Alice-sama."

She almost declined, but after seeing my face she apparently reconsidered and nodded.

Her smile was a little sheepish.

Crap, I may have looked a little bit sulking.

But I mean, isn't it a bit lonely if people are that reserved?

From Ilya's point of view, that's how slaves are in this world.

But for me, Ilya is my comrade I'm traveling with.

"In fact, I did find myself wanting underwear."

"Underwear...?"

I-I see.

Certainly, she might need more than just a change of clothes.

As far as her clothes go, for now she can swap between her casual clothes and the Leather Robe.

But, underwear!?

Does she mean I'm going to buy it with her?

Considering how we arrived at the topic, it's a bit difficult for me to tell her to buy it on her own.

The memories of when Shion took me shopping came back to me.

"It's not weird. There's nothing weird. I'm a woman. I'm a... woman. Maybe."

"?"

When I stop having this inner conflict might be the end of me.

Be strong, me!

When we asked the guild's receptionist about the ruin's location and if there wasn't an easy job around there, they told us there was just one job of escorting someone through the ruins.

Literally two birds with one stone.

The reward was fifteen silver coins, 1500 Rook.

Apparently we could depart right away, so it was just right for us.

It would cover our hotel fee in this town.

But thinking about it, owning your own house really would change a lot.

If we stayed in inns all the time, any amount of traveling funds would run dry sooner or later.

Let's buy a house in the capital.

I began mulling such a dream just a little.

"We're accepting this request."

"Understood. Please sign this form, then. Also, if you either forfeit or fulfill the request, please hand in a report."

"I see."

I signed something like a contract and received some documents.

Speaking of which, Shion-san had also signed something.

"Dear customer, is this the first request you accept?" the receptionist asked after checking my registration information.

"Yes, that's right."

"Would you like me to give you an explanation of working for the Guild?"

"Ah yes, please do."

Come to think of it, I never had the leisure or always left it to other, so I have no idea about my job.

"Understood. Basically, jobs from the Guild come with a rank. S-Rank, A-Rank, B-Rank, like this jobs are classified until E-Rank. The request you just accepted is categorized as E-Rank, a job that any and all adventurers can accept.

"Heh, I see."

If you can earn 1500 Rook with an E-Rank request, then adventuring pays quite well.

Well, it might also cost you your life, so if the compensation is little or much is rather difficult to decide.

"To take on higher-ranked requests, you need to clear ten requests of a lower rank. If you forfeit a job, as a penalty it is subtracted from the

achieved requests. If you have no achieved requests for that rank and you forfeit, it is still counted as a minus, so please take care, okay?"

I see, so you can go into the negatives, too.

I nodded that I understood.

"Rank mainly denotes danger or difficulty. Of course the rewards increase along with the rank, but please don't forget that so does the danger to your lives," the receptionist bowed earnestly.

If you actually work at the Guild, aren't adventurers dying an everyday occurrence?

Like during the bandit extermination just the other day...

"Requests have a time limit. If you pass it, it will automatically be judged as forfeiting."

She didn't say it, but this rule was for when you couldn't make the report yourself.

In other words, in preparation for you losing your life and thus your ability to report and such, that rule had been established.

Looks like you couldn't rise in the ranks that easily.

"Also, the Guild will purchase any drop items you gain if you fight monsters, generating additional income for you. Please bring whatever you get, okay?"

Come to think of it, wasn't there something like that?

Medicinal herbs, Bear Ears, Squid Ink?

What are they going to do with bear ears...

Well, that doesn't matter now.

"This, while simple, is the initial explanation. Whenever you have further questions, please ask any time."

"That was very informative. Thank you very much."

Was Elenore-san doing this in Rinnal, too?

If adventurers she knew had lost their lives in the incident the other day... that'd be a shock, huh.

"Then I will envelope this introduction from the Guild for you. Please make your way to the client yourself. The term for this request is four days, including today. Please make your report during the Guild's business hours before the four days are up. The details are written in the materials I just passed you. Good luck!"

I politely returned the bow to the polite receptionist and left the guild behind.

I cursorily checked the documents I've been passed and headed to the client's house as depicted on a map.

I was glad to be given a map, but it was still trouble in this unfamiliar place.

"Alice-sama, is this alright?"

"Hm, what's wrong?" I tore my eyes from the documents and looked at Ilya.

"Yes, it not not be my place to say, but fundamentally, requests like escort and the like that involve other people are dangerous and you should be careful when choosing the job."

"Eh? Why?"

Was escorting people that dangerous?

We were only going to the Ruins, right?

"Not to doubt the client, but there are also people who catch adventurers off guard like that and rob them. No matter where an adventurer loses his life, the militas and knight orders won't move a finger.

I see, in that case the Guild will just file it as a failed request.

Magic won't be a problem if we're in the same party, but that didn't work with physical attacks.

Just like Shion-san had said some time, they could literally stab me in the back... something like that.

"Besides, even if that doesn't happen, guarding someone unused to combat is more difficult than you'd think. You'll never know what unexpected actions they'll take."

"It's difficult, isn't it, in all kinds of ways."

Come to think of it, a fight to protect, huh.

So far I've always fought while being protected, so fighting to protect will be a first.

Thinking about that, I tensed a bit.

Another's life rested on my shoulders.

But Shion-san has done a good thing training a weakling like me.

That's my Onee-chan!

"But I am your shield, Alice-sama. No matter where Milady goes, I will follow. That has not changed."

"Thanks. You were worried, weren't you? ... this body's weakness is the one thing I can't do anything about."

It's paper, after all.

Someone gets a lucky punch in and I'm done for.

It's too late now, but the way I spent my points really is for pros, huh.

I have ways to bring down anyone and anything, but there's a chance for anyone to take me down, too.

I really want to live long, though.

"I suppose 'a woman you grow wanting to protect' refers to people like Milady."

"...what a sad fat. I won't cough up blood, though——," I set on to say myself when I inadvertently looked at Ilya.

She had her never-changing, cheerful smile.

"Ilya, your body... is it alright?"

It suddenly bothered me.

I cannot pretend ignorance forever, leaving it alone.

"Alice-sama... ahh, all because of the honored mentor."

"Ilya."

Ilya tried to jokingly play it down, but there was somewhat of an edge to her voice.

"I am very sorry, Milady... but it is nothing that changes over a day or two."

"Then... in a year?"

"..."

"Can I take your silence as the answer?"

"For now... please let me keep it a secret a little while longer."

"It's... not an illness, is it?"

"It is not."

I had somewhat guessed that.

So, the problem really lay with me, huh.

I still lacked something, didn't I?

Something to make Ilya resolve herself to 'something'.

Shit~. But Till hadn't told me anything yet, so I think it's okay for now.

Those two just had that atmosphere of a silent understanding between the two of them.

And, while I was sorting my emotions, we finally arrived at the client's house.

I checked the map again, but it was probably here.

"Smithy Lute" was written on the sign.

"Alright. We'll continue this some other time. Now we have work to to do."

"Yes, Milady."

From the outside, smoke rose from the chimney as it did with smithies.

As expected, they were using fire.

Could they also change raw materials into weapons like with magic, as Tailors did?

Well, asking couldn't hurt.

"Excuse me, we're here for your request at the Guild," I knocked on the door. I felt someone inside rush to the door.

It opened right away.

In the door appeared a petite girl wearing a hat.

Seeing her stained apron, this girl might be a Smith.

Her hair was light-brown and reminded vaguely of Shion-san, but the atmosphere around her was completely different.

Adorable would be a good word to describe this girl.

Maybe because it would get in the way of work, her hair was gathered behind her head and flowed down her back.

And, wait...?

This girl?

"Ah!" the girl voiced as she saw me.

"Ehm... the one who requested an escort...?"

"Yes, that's me. I'm Cira. Please come in."

Ahh, this might be fate.

Anyhow, my first job.

Refocusing myself, I followed Cira's invitation.

Smith

After being led into the room, we first sat down around the table and had some tea.

When you invite people, you treat them to something.

Whether in Japan or in another world, that doesn't change, does it.

"Once more, I am the one who accepted your request at the guild, my name is Alice. This is my companion, Ilya."

"It is a pleasure to meet you."

"And this is the letter of introduction from the guild."

When I was done introducing us and handed over the sealed letter of introduction, Cira did open her eyes wide in surprise.

She had probably thought we were some representatives or errand girls to hear her story.

We're not though, not that.

"You're so young, but already adventurers..."

Her hat twitched once.

Frankly, I couldn't help but be intrigued by that more than anything else.

Take it off.

I want to take it off!!

What's hidden below there!?

"Hehe, Alice-sama?"

"Hah!?"

While Cyla had lowered her head to read the letter of introduction——I had unconsciously reached for the hat.

"?"

Before Cira raised her head again, I was drinking tea again, okay?

I was holding the cup in my hand acting thus.

"Is there a problem?"

"No, this tea, it's delicious."

"You're exaggerating, it's not that ameow... amazing."

Ameow...?

W-what, Ilya?

I'm not going to point that out or anything, okay?

Ahh, I'm making a pointless fuss.

Time for reflection.

Oh, and Ilya?

That smile, it's scary.

"Ehem. So, about the request: If you are uneasy with us taking it on, we will of course accept a cancellation."

Because of the circumstances of escort missions, cancellations are possible if the client feels uneasy.

It's even written among the main points.

Obviously.

"No, if you are adventurers, then you've gone into Ruins before, right? Besides... personally, ehm, I can trust Alice-san, or should I say..."

For some reason she was looking at me with a blushing face.

Hah?

"Last night, I was also in the bar. I remember you really well, Alice-san."

"I-is that so."

I on the other hand remember hardly anything~

But, well.

Worrying won't help you any if you can't remember.

If it doesn't turn into a problem, it's all right.

It won't turn into a problem... will it?

"We can depart any time, so once you are ready, Cira, give us a call any time."

"I'll also be ready right away! I'll change into some other clothes, so please wait a moment," Cira said and hurriedly disappeared into a room further into the house.

In the room next to ours... or rather, in the smithing area I could catch glances of, there was a big furnace with a fire burning inside.

We've been hearing louding noises of iron being hit for a while. Was somebody working there?

The owner, maybe?

"Sorry I took so long. Let's go."

Before enough time to call it "waiting" had passed, Cira had returned.

Even after changing clothes, you're not going to take off that hat, are you?

Cira was a level 10 Apprentice Smith.

We formed a party and headed to the town's Ruins under Cira's guidance.

While chatting about this and that, we found out Cira's business there was the same as ours.

Hearing about it, it was obvious. In this world, there were classes suited to combat and those that were not. Smithes and Tailors and classes like them didn't earn experience and level up by defeating enemies, but by improving their skills.

In other words, Cira had practiced enough and reached the level to become a proper smith, but because she couldn't fight, she had made a request at the guild.

"Heh? So after you become a proper smith, you want to have your own store in the royal capital?"

"Yes, I cannot rely on my teacher's kindness forever after all."

"Eh? He's not your father?"

"No... I was a refugee."

Cira smiled dejectedly.

Damn my insensitivity.

I really should abandon my peace-addled thought processes, I think.

"...I'm sorry, Cira-san."

"Ah, no! My teacher has been really good to me... it's embarrassing, but, like you said, Alice-san, I think of him as a father just a little meowt... bit."

Is that how it meows...?

"But if you're aiming for the royal capital, then you're going to the same place I am."

"Eh? You want to go there, too, Alice-san?"

"Yes, we will only stay in this town until tomorrow before we head on to the capital."

"That's so nice... I know I keep talking about it, but I don't know when my dream will ever come true."

"Hmm..."

A smith, huh.

A connection to a smith.

Shouldn't I treasure this?

"Cira-san, do you have regular customers?"

"Y-yes. In this town, there is someone I'm receiving some favors from. But as I'm only my teacher's assistant, the inscriptions are all in his name."

Her embarrassed actions are so cute.

Somewhat girlish.

Maybe I should use her as a reference?

Anyhow, that aside it means she's a good smith, doesn't it?

"Unless there is a problem with it, you could ask Cira-sama to show you her Attributes?" Ilya suggested from behind us.

Does looking at her Attributes tell us something about her skills as a smith?

"Ah, yes. I don't mind."

"Really? Thank you. Could you show me, then?"

"Yes!"

Strength 1, Endurance 1, Protection 1, Agility 2, Smithing 5

Hm?

"Until my teacher picked me up, I had no idea I had a talent for smithing... embarrassingmeow... -ly."

That... what is that all ameowt?

"That is a wonderful talent."

I'm a little lost as to what it exactly means, but I understand that much.

I'll just ask Ilya the rest later.

But with an Attribute at 5, as far as I know that makes her a monster!

Well, maybe I should use another word.

Genius should work better.

Be it Onee-chan, be it Ilya, Till... I haven't asked Till, but I guess that goes without asking.

I... might not be able to let Cira go.

"... do you have connections in the capital?"

"None at all..."

"I might become your patron in the capital."

"EH!?"

Cira looked at me with sparkling eyes.

So radiant.

"I'm an adventurer, so I'd be really glad about being close with a good smith. And if it's a golden egg like you, I think that's something to look forward to."

If she won't have a place to live in the capital, I won't mind offering her one.

Of course first I'll have to get my own livelihood in the capital going.

"A golden egg, you're embarrassing meow... me."

Even if you say that, I won't let you escape, you kmeow?

This girl might be a good enough smith to cause rumors even if I leave her alone.

That I've met her now while she's still an apprentice could be my luck.

Her inscriptions haven't started circulating, either.

Hmm.

If possible, I want to monopolize her.

And I want her to produce order-made equipment for me.

"My dream is to open a shop in the capital, or rather, to find one, right person among the many people there and become that person's exclusive smith. Becoming exclusive is every smith's dream!"

"Mine! Become my smith!"

Ah, I didn't mean to say that out loud...

"I-I couldn't... Alice-san... embarrassingmeow..."

Ahh.

This cuteness that makes me writhe inside, is it that kind?

The cuteness of animals?

I'm also certain what's hidden under that hat, Cira.

"Sorry, I got ahead of myself. If I don't show power worthy of you, there's no point talking about it, is there? Please use this escort mission to judge meow skills."

I don't mind.

Who would willingly become the personal smith of someone weak?

Cira must also have the pride of a craftsman.

I'll have to show her my power.

Enough power to shock her heart.

——I'll show her my new magic.

Level 5 Petite Panther

"..."

On a hill outside town, on the way to the Ruins, we encountered a formidable foe.

Ahh, I see.

Outside town, the enemies don't suddenly become strong.

I mean, no beginning adventurers would go to such ruins.

Yepyep.

I agilely avoided the formidable foe's charge.

"Alice-sama? You're not going to blow it away?"

"Eh?"

Blow it away?

Ilya, who I had asked to protect Cira, was curiously cocking her head.

Monsters are monsters, so having her switch from protecting me to protecting Cira didn't need much persuasion.

"...where I am from, there were people who could communicate with monsters. That's what I want to try right now. That's how I feel."

"You can do that? That's amazing, Alice-sama."

"Do your best!"

With their encouragement, I kept sidestepping the formidable foe's charges like a matador.

Heh, I've already seen through your attacks.

They won't work on me!

"Huhhh..."

I took a deep breath.

This animal is attacking me because it's scared.

They are scared, those animals.

That misunderstanding is the tragedy here.

Can we allow that to go on?

No!

It's wrong!

When we give up because we can't understand each other, that is the real end.

Even if everyone else gives up, I won't!

"See... I'm not scary."

I crouched down and stretched out my hand towards the growling formidable foe.

I could tell Ilya and Cira were watching over me with bated breath.

The formidable foe looked at me with its round, adorable eyes.

"...?"

It looked at me somewhat dubiously.

"I'm not scary..."

"..."

The formidable foe and I stared at each other, and when my hand was finally about to touch its——

"——WOAH!!"

...didn't touch.

The moment I was about to get bitten, I pulled back my hand.

"How is this possible... It was still scared of me."

I quickly built up some distant.

The formidable foe looked straight at me.

What indomitable will rested in those cute, adorable eyes!

"...I see. It is my duty to answer that will, is it."

I formed the image of my magic activating.

My body became hot.

Light gathered.

"——Blade of Light descending from the Heavens, become my Sword and split the Darkness! ——Lightning!"

The middle-class magic I had recently learned mercilessly pierced the formidable foe.

The formidable foe... quietly fell forward.

I walked up to it and embraced the fallen formidable foe.

"This is the only way..."

While the soft body in my arms faded, I shed a tear.

Farewell...

"...Alice-sama."

"...What?"

"Just now, was that magic necessary?"

A lion uses its full strength even to hunt a rabbit, they say.

You're still too naive, Ilya.

Today the sky is so clouded, it looked to be almost crying.

The sky is crying for you, too.

Rest in peace, my friend.

In the dark

After conquering the Ruins without problem, we returned from the Ruins to earth by once again stepping on a magic circle.

By now, the sky really looked about to let loose, and a forced march back to town was maidenly impossible.

We would indiscriminately get drenched down to our underwear without a doubt and I didn't want to shame Ilya in town.

...Well, myself, neither.

That being said, waiting out the rain in the monster-infested Ruins would be tiring, too.

When I looked around for a better solution, I spotted a hollow in the cliff rising nearby.

It wasn't enough to call it a cave, but deep enough to weather the rain.

After retreating inside for the moment, we took a breath.

"Cira-san, are you in a hurry?"

"No, I'm fine. Let's wait until the rain lets up."

Thus, that's what we did.

We'd finished what we'd come for, so there was no need to rush.

Both Ilya and Cira were no longer apprentices, but fully qualified.

A happy occasion.

Name: Alice
Race: Halfelf
Gender: Female
Age: 15
Class: Mage
Level: 6

We'd done nothing but fight in this place, and still I was only Level 6.

But, well, thinking about it differently, that might be an amazing speed.

My limit was 15 after all.

But then again... Till's class was Sage, wasn't it?

An advanced Class, I guess?

Therefore, I'd probably get reset to Level 1 after the next class-up.

Not that worrying about that now helped.

Attack Magic: Thunder (Mastered), no Cast Time, 5s Cooldown
Attack Magic: Lightning (Proficiency 2), No Cast Time, 20s Cooldown
Support Magic: Heal, no Cast Time, 20s Cooldown
Support Magic: Lightning Enchant, no Cast Time, 10s Cooldown

Skill: Cast Time Reduction (special)

Weapon: None (Broken Lightning Rod)
Armor: Improved Leather Robe (High Quality) (Inscription: Adele)
Accessory: Sylv Faeria

That were my current options.

Instant mid-class magic made me feel the awesomeness of Cast Time Reduction (special).

Also, I learned that support magic had no proficiency.

I mean, I've used Heal so much so far.

Still, the burden it put on me was considerable. It was more exhausting than using the mid-class magic Lightning.

Furthermore, depending on the graveness of the wound, I might collapse afterwards.

But that didn't mean I could do without that magic.

Then there was the other support magic, Lightning Enchant.

Till had shown the kind already, so I knew what it did.

It would probably cover a weapons in light, granting them the lightning element.

"Alice-sama, are you not cold?"

Come to think of it, my skin felt a bit chilly.

I had gotten a little wet from the rain.

"Nothing to worry about."

"If you say so. But it would be bad if you caught a cold," Ilya said and huddled closer.

So warm.

So warm, but what was this.

"Woah..."

Cira was staring at us with wide eyes, blushing.

Ahh, well, yeah.

The dilemma where a scene feels wholesome to oneself, but looks decidedly not so from the outside.

"A-anyway, Alice-san, your magic is amazing. You defeat every monster with one hit. And the color is so beautiful."

I wonder, alone with Ilya I'm not that self-conscious, but with a third party around this is extremely awkward.

Let's not overdo it, okay, Ilya?

But while thinking that goes through my head, I don't think I'll stop her, either.

...not that I'm going to say way.

But more importantly now...

"The color? Isn't it the same for everyone?"

"No, Alice-sama. A magic's color shows your personality. It differs from person to person."

Was that how it was?

Of course, I had only seen only my own lightning magic, so I'd thought it was normal.

Come to think of it, I forgot because I'd been too desperate at the time, but the ice magic used by that bandit felt different from the one Till uses.

I don't remember the bandit's anymore, but Till's is a a deep, deep blue.

"Alice-san's lightning is silver and very beautiful. I've never heard of a magic colored like that before."

"Really?"

Well, when it comes to lightning, I'd think of something gold or blue or so.

So I can't say I didn't think 'Hmm? Silver?'

"But shouldn't we talk about you now, Cira-san? Congratulations, now you're a proper Smith."

"Y-yes. I'm so happy. With this, I can carve my own inscriptions. I'm kind of embarrassedmeow..."

Ahh, she's so shy~~

At that point, Cira fidgeted and looked at me with upturned eyes.

Hmm? What?

"So, ehm, Alice-san. About what we talked about before we entered the ruins, that is..."

"——? Sorry, you two. Didn't you hear something just now?" Ilya apologetically interrupted our talk.

After she pointed it out, Cira and I listened carefully, too.

What we heard was the sound of the rainfall getting stronger and stronger.

Frankly, I couldn't hear anything else.

But Ilya kept listening intently.

Hmm...?

"This is... a landslide!"

"Eh!?"

Now that she'd mentioned it, the ground may have rumbled a bit...

No, shit!

If we stay here, we'll get buried alive!?

"We have to get out of here!"

"Going out now is even more dangerous! Alice-sama!"

I see, the landslide would hit us directly?

"!"

As Ilya had said, not a moment later earth and sand came falling from above.

The rumbling was dreadful.

I was getting chills over the thought that our shallow cave might collapse.

I couldn't remain standing anymore.

The noise of the avalanche was ear-shattering.

I bodily felt how a thunderous roar alone could fill people with base fear.

Seeing the earth and sand rush down the slope, our only luck was that it didn't enter out cave.

That relief only lasted until our view from the cave was completely covered.

Just how long had the three of us waited with bated breath?

Finally, the rumbling died down.

No, conversely now we even stopped hearing the rain like it was moving to a far away world.

...just how deep had we been buried?

We were covered in complete, total darkness.

My heart was beating like a warning bell.

As quietly as possible, I took a shallow breath.

"...are you two alright?"

"Yes, Alice-sama."

"I-I'm meowkay... okay."

For the moment, relief washed over me.

I had felt them right next to me so I'd thought they were alright, but hearing them say it still gave peace of mind.

But buried alive, huh...?

"This... if we dig wrongly, more earth will come falling from above?"

"Maybe. It's all loose from the rain."

"We... cannot get out, can we?"

I couldn't give her an immediate answer.

It still felt unreal.

Not monsters, not humans... but nature was going to kill us?

Well, in front of nature's fury, both man and monster might be nothing but trash.

But still...

"... It's too early to give up. If we dig from as high up as possible, the rubble might be thin there, so let's carefully try that," I said and pointed up. But.

"Alice-sama. We don't know up from down."

"Indeed."

Ahh, I see.

The others couldn't see?

What's with my eyes granting me vision even in this darkness?

Are they shooting sight-beams or something?

"Can you grasp my hands, you two? I'll lead you where I think we need to go."

"Alice-sama..."

"Alice-san..."

Don't be anxious, me.

Collect yourself.

Calm down.

Don't panic.

If you don't spend encouragement here, then what are you for, my heart.

"Don't worry, there's no need to give up. It might be unexpectedly easy to get out."

Since the two couldn't see, I grasped for their hands.

I wasn't giving up.

"Right, Ilya?" I added with just a little tease in my voice.

"...hehe, if that Alice-sama says so, I cannot remain idle, can I."

"?"

It was funny how Cira inclined her head in wonderment.

Alright, let's do this.

Like hell I can die in this pointless place for a pointless reason.

"Hah, hah."

Carefully digging out way outside with the three of us proved to be difficult.

We had nothing like a spade on our hands, so I was digging with the grip of my Rod.

Maybe Ilya had judged it dangerous to dig with her spear, but she had put it in the bag of the cave and was digging with her own hands.

I'll have to examine them later, they might have been scraped bloody.

Later, huh.

Cira was holding a Wooden Stick and using it the same way I did to dig through the earth.

By the way, that Wooden Stick was Cira's proper and true weapon.

Getting hit with it hurt.

Although I guess it wouldn't work on Ilya.

"...I can't... work anymeow..."

A little while after we began digging, Cira dropped out first.

"Sorry... sorry..."

"Hah, hah, it's fine. Don't apologize? It's our job to protect you, so please rest for a while, Cira-san."

While gasping for air, Cira drew back into the cave with her head held low.

Her steps were uncertain. Did she not fall over along the way in this darkness due to some animal instinct?

"Alice-sama, please take a short rest, too. I shall make more progress in your place."

Am I... still doing okay?

Don't act tough, me, collect yourself now.

Now isn't the time to suddenly fall over.

I was thinking at myself.

"...okay, I'll rest a little. But Ilya, you don't force yourself either."

"*Yes, Milady.*"

She would force herself. I knew that, but I couldn't tell her to stop.

Sorry, Ilya.

Please let me rely on your right now.

I gave the Rod I'd been using to Ilya and rested my body.

"I'm sorr... ry... sor... don't...!"

"Cira-san...? Are you alright!?"

After I stepped back to the end of the cave and sat down next to Cira, I noticed her change.

Her breathing was erratic?

It was too shallow, too fast.

This was... hyperventilation?

The oxygen!?

From what I saw, the space we were in was definitely not wide.

But I wasn't having that much trouble breathing yet.

I looked at Ilya, but her breathing seemed stable, too.

I see... mental anxiety had caused Cira to panic.

It's understandable.

"Agh! Ngg...!"

"It's alright, Cira-san... It's alright, so calm down? Take a slow breath. Don't be impatient?"

I talked to her as gently, calmingly as I possible.

I held her hand and told her she would be alright.

If I wasn't mistaken, I had heard dealing with hyperventilation the wrong way had the opposite effect and could be dangerous.

But most important was calming down the patient and make him feel relieved.

"There's nothing to be scared of. See? Take deep breaths. Slowly. See? It's all right."

I gently held her hand.

"——"

Cira's hand flexed and I felt a pain like a cat's scratches.

Her nails might be poking me.

"——See? It's not scary, you see? You don't have to worry about anything. Take slow breaths."

Her hand slowly relaxed.

Her breathing, too, calmed down.

It was fine. As long as she calmed herself, she'd get better right away."

"...o... cha...?"

"Eh?"

With dilated eyes, Cira was looking at me.

There were tear tracks there.

Even in the darkness, I could see those clearly.

"Calm down?"

Thinking about the meaning of the murmurs I'd just heard, I leaned towards Cira and whispered near her ears.

"Cira————leave the rest to me."

With a really quiet voice, I whispered so that only Cira could hear me.

"——"

Once, her body stiffened like something had surprised her, but then she relaxed like she was calm now.

For a short while, I looked at her condition like that.

Her breathing had stabilized.

"She's asleep...?"

Come to think of it, the battles she wasn't used to and the fear of being shut it must have pushed her to her limit.

I felt a bit reluctant about it, but I slowly unfastened her hand that was still holding mine tightly.

"Now then."

Don't want to become a liar, do I.

How much time had passed since we'd been buried?

I had no feeling for that whatsoever.

It could have been a whole night, even.

On the other hand, I did feel that that guess was a bit long.

"Ng... the air is getting a bit thin."

With three people in this closed-off space, the oxygen wouldn't last that long.

And yet the digging was processing only slowly.

The more we digged, the more earth took its place.

The fear of it all pouring into the cave sent shivers down my spine.

"Ilya... you can still go on, right?"

"Of course, Milady."

Of course she couldn't be alright.

She hadn't even taken a single break.

Although she had borrowed Cira's Wooden Stick, what had happened to her hands in the long time she had digged barehanded?

Regret almost crushed me when Ilya replied like nothing was wrong.

Digging would probably get us nowhere.

I didn't know how much earth we were buried behind, but without enough power to blow all of that away, this was nothing but a waste of effort.

But, what to do then?

There was magic, but my lightning magic was not made for something like "blowing stuff away".

There was too much earth, too.

And even as a repellent force...

No, I could only go for it.

"GOOO!"

Pushing my hands against the earth, I concentrated my magic on my right hand and accumulated it.

The trick was the same I used at the lake.

But——

"——ugh!!"

You could call it the natural outcome, but what was blown away was me, not the earth.

I heavily crushed into the wall in the back.

"Alice-sama!"

"...I'm... fine."

That worked...

My body wasn't tough enough to do that again and again though.

But I could only take my chances with what I had.

With no losing option, I tried what I could.

"Split the heavens and become a ray of light, to strike my enemies! Thunder!"

I shot lightning into the earth.

But, as expected, it only "pierced" and didn't blow anything away.

When I'd shot it into a wall for the first time in those Ruins, it hadn't destroyed the wall, either.

I'd known that, but...

When I lowered my gaze, I saw Cira still sleeping.

But, it was a fact that the air was getting thin.

There was no time.

"...there is one last thing I can do, Alice-sama."

"There's no need."

"Eh?"

Hearing my immediate reply, Ilya made a dumbfounded face.

"I don't know what you're intending to do, but it would kill you, wouldn't it?"

"——"

"That's why you don't have to do that. I'll break through this. I won't give up——!"

Mass.

Right. Because it has no mass, my magic cannot blow stuff away.

Then I'll have to find a replacement for that.

I looked at the Lightning Rod in my hands.

It was broken and didn't work adequately anymore.

But... if that was the case.

Onee-chan, I will use this to save people.

"——Come, Lightning Spirit, become my Blade! Lightning Enchant!"

With the added lightning element, the Rod shone silver.

I had one chance, and I had no clue what this one attack would do to the ground.

We might get buried alive completely.

But at this rate, the time limit was nearing.

I didn't want to regret without doing everything I could.

"I will blow the earth away. Ilya, hold on to Cira and me and defend us with your Field in that moment."

"Y-yes, Alice-sama."

I would blow the entrance open and before new earth came falling, I would jump us out of the cave.

Using magic at maximum output, consecutively, and skillfully.

I could do it. No, I *would* do it.

I brandished my left hand holding the Lightning Rod.

"——Blade of Light descending from the Heavens, become my Sword and split the Darkness!"

The pentagram spun.

My maximum output.

But I wasn't just going to shoot a lightning.

I would make the rod a projectile and shoot that.

That's why I had enchanted it, for the magnetic repellant force.

Pushed forward by the lightning, it would even break the sound barrier and————

"Lightning!!"

One strike, the silver torrent from my left hand catapulted the Rod forward like a bullet.

"Urgh——!"

Activating mid-class magic with my left hand.

My power left me all at once.

But I couldn't complain about the firepower.

The flash blew the entrance open and shot all the way up through the rain clouds before disappearing.

I could see one ray of light from between the clouds.

And then——the vibrations.

Bear this!!

"Now... Ilya!"

"Any time, Milady!"

Ilya laid her hand around my waist.

Cira was on her back.

The vibrations got stronger and stronger.

Control the activation of my magic, create a repellant force below my legs, and——

"Fly!!"

The moment before the entrance was buried again, we flew out of the cave.

We were almost crushed by the avalanche of earth and rocks, but that much was expected.

Protected by Ilya's Field, we broke through the pouring ground and escaped into the sky.

The feeling of freedom was refreshing.

"... what is this."

"Alice-sama..."

Ilya hugged my waist stronger.

"Nn... it hurts, Ilya."

"Please bear it, Milady."

Yeah, yeah, bear it, right.

"..."

in the air, I'd spontaneously looked to the top of the cliff.

I'd only thought about checking out the landslide. The trees and rocks on the plateau at the top of the cliff had collapsed and only the part with the landslide was completely bare.

That, that was a natural phenomenon, right...?

I'd only seen a fear-induced illusion, nothing more.

I wanted to laugh it off.

——and still, the thought that I'd seen a woman with red eyes on that plateau made my whole body shiver just a little.

Intermission: Remembering a Shooting Star

I these days, the times that I have been absent-minded have been often.
There wasn't the desire to go adventure, or handle any requests nearby, return and pass the time doing nothing.
When I felt like it, I would go out on the plain, past the forest, and go to the ruins.
These few days, I would really do just that.
I held the expectation in my heart that she was really there.
That suddenly coming, showing off, holding a laughing while crying face girl.
As if she were a shooting star, passing in front of me.
Thus, I reached the plains in the midafternoon, and looked at the field of flowers without meaning.

"Is it time yet, like this……"

She who I had embraced, was really delicate, far too delicate to be an adventurer.
Just one mistake and they could die, it made me so insecure that but there was nothing else to hold on to.

"Well, the chibi Elf and the Dragon girl are with her"

Especially, the chibi Elf was fathomless.
The fight with the ice dragon was absolutely not serious.
After all, right at the end before the ice dragon used its breath, she chanted an outrageous magic spell.
Because the dragon girl moved, that's how it appeared.

"Fuu, it's not like me. Let's go back"

Looking at the view in front of me, I found 4 Syracuse flowers.
To find 4 lucky flowers, just by chance while walking through the plain remembering.

I returned to town, it had only been a few days since then, and the town had returned to its former self, I felt everyone's enthusiasm around me.
The spirit around here, makes me proud to have been born and raised on this town.
Rinnal is a ruaral area but, it was built from an expedition to the North in an unexplored region, an adventurer's town.
It wasn't one that would lose heart over something so trivial.
It mourned those that perished, the following day after the event, everyone including me cried a lot, and then we held a service festival to send our brothers off back to the goddess's arms.
Then, we feel sad when we feel sad.
And then the next day, we live at our best.
That is the town that I was born and raised in.
That girl, I want to see that blue faced girl once more.
Anyways, in a manner of speaking, the this town has become independent from the capital and those guys on the council were enthusiastic, after handing over the 50 gold coins they were used for revival and development, after is just to move on I guess.
In the dark green forest where none have tread, there is said to be a fairy village.
To reach there, is said to be the dream of the adventurers in this town.

"I'm home"
"Oh my, welcome home Shion. A friend just arrived"

Chatting in the living room with mother, a girl with red hair sitting on a chair turned around.

"Aa, Shion. Welcome home"
"Eleanor huh?"

You couldn't really call this town big, she was completely the same age childhood friend.
Is it because her family manages the service trade shops, she had a natural smile on her face, she was someone that could make you feel at ease.

"Nene, Shion. You're free today aren't you?"
"Well, it's not that I'm free……"
"What is this child saying, spending everyday just wandering around"

From mother's perspective, it really looks that way to her.
Che.

"I came because I have a request for Shion"
"Request? You went out of your to specifically nominate me?"
"Un, because I don't know adventurer more wise or reliable than Shion"
"You're sure piling on the praise aren't you?"

I let out a sarcastic laugh at the mind reading Eleanor

"To tell you the truth, I was thinking of going to the Royal Capital to open my own shop there. Because I want to go to the capital and do a preliminary inspection I want to request Shion as my guard."
"Royal Capital……"

The Royal Capital you say?

"The dream you were talking about earlier."
"That's right! Not someday, right now at this moment is what I thought. Because those things happen in this world."

Eleanor's eyes were shining.
The eyes of people with will power are different, I looked at my reflection in the window pane.

"I see. I'll do it. When will we leave?"
"After I finish preparing, after about 3 days? You'll accept it? I'm so glad"
"Dummy, of course I'll go with you. People that are about to do business shouldn't waste money."(tln:Meaning 'Don't waste time asking something that has already been agreed to')
"It's an investment. While you're my childhood friend, you're also a promising adventurer."
"Fufu, it's a welcome thing. Alright, see you in three days."
"Thanks, Shion!"

While thinking about Eleanor's dazzling smile, I was only a little depressed.

That evening, while preparing for the journey, my father entered the room.

“You know, you really shouldn’t enter your adolescent daughter’s room suddenly, I always say that.”
“I don’t remember having that kind of sensitive daughter”
“Yeah yeah, so, what did you need?”
“Shion, you’re going to the capital?”

As close as always this married couple.
Did you tell him immediately, mother?

“That’s right. As Elenor’s guard, we’ll just go and come back though.”

Dad lets out am exaggerated sigh at to my answer.

“Even though it’s the capital?”
“……yeah, and?”
“What are you being strangely obstinate for, my unworthy daughter?”

Obstinate, huh?

“No, Dad. It’s not that……”

I suddenly remember, tears start to fall.

“She didn’t say it”

I couldn’t stop.

“That girl…… She didn’t say, come with me together!”

Remembering that evening, my chest felt as if were about to burst.

“Well well……you understand why the little miss didn’t say that don’t you?”
“In my heart, I can’t accept it……”

What kind of face I should show, I don’t know if I can meet her.

“Your mother, for the first time since you’ve been born, it’s the first time she’s worried about you, it’s a fairly late adolescence”

Gahaha, my dad cracks a laugh.
Adolescence huh? It's unbecoming of an elder sister right?

"Hey Shion. Even if you set aside what you think about the little miss, what do you think her reason was?"
"Me?"
"Don't you think that is important? Feelings are something that if you don't put into words they won't be understood. You aren't God."

Did I say it?
Take me with you?
……
I see……I didn't say it huh?

"Shion, when you let a shooting star pass by, you won't become happy you know"

A shooting star huh?
She really shows off.
Haha.

"Did you break something? You're starting to get up there aren't you, Dad?"

He still has some good muscles, I'll give them a punch.

"Ogu! Geho, that hurt! Unlike the little miss, it's heavy, Shion's is"
"Naturally, the power behind the feelings I got from you are heavy, there's no way they'd be light"
"Fu-n, I'm not finished yet"
"Fufu, we'll see who reaches the fairy village first, it's a race"
"Yeah, I look forward to it. Bring your little sister with you when you come."

The two laughed with each other.
Looking through the window outside, there was no shooting star conveniently flying by.
Naturally.
The shooting star, had already gone by.

"Don't be late"

Wait for me.
I’m going to be there soon!

——Alice!

Shopping

「Ok, the only thing left after this is shopping for clothes.」
「I see, Ojou-sama. Fufu, I- l'm looking forward to it.」
「Is that so? You're looking forward to it?」

After seeing Ilia's smile, picking out clothes is fun after all. Picking them out with someone is fun too…
After saying that, I guess I'm expected to go along too. Even picking out underwear…
So we went over to Rufin Third Street this afternoon.

After completing the escort and ruin exploration request from yesterday, we had brought Saira, who was fast asleep, home and completed it safely.
We walked to the blacksmith's forge, the 40 year old blacksmith master came out from inside the workshop and took Saira in his arms and went back into the workshop.
As he did that, he stopped momentarily and said

「Sorry bout that」

Simply saying, the master carried Saira inside just like that with a somber expression.
Because the signature for the request completion had not been received, we thought we were going to come back to the blacksmith shop after buying clothes.
It was painful to wait and see.

Because we were exhausted, we went straight back to the inn that day, and slept immediately.

I was woken up in the middle of the night at the sound of odd rustling, for some reason Til had found her way into my bed.
She was incredibly cute, I wondered what I should do, but there was nothing to be done.

Regardless of her age, she looks exactly like a child, it's calming.
Especially her sleeping face could be called innocent.
Holding her just like, I completed my Til-pillow and slept soundly until morning.

Then the following morning, I was awoken with an unjustified chop from Til and told to prepare for tomorrow's journey.

The distance was 3 days travel by wagon however, not knowing what might happen, I went to purchase 5 days' worth of supplies.
Things like a tent for sleeping in the open, and various tools of that kind were available in Rinnal, basically the main things this town held were ingredient related.
Of course, not forgetting the fodder for the horses that do their best pulling the wagon.
The pair of fawn-colored horses were pulling the carriage, Til would frequently tell me, that they listen well.
When we rested along the street, I gave some rinnals to the horses, They were really happy and nuzzled against me.
That cuteness isn't just for show.
I got carried away and wiped their sweat with a towel in one hand and almost got stepped on.

We don't need that trap, horse-san.
As not to be careless, we left the horses at the hotel.
There was a service along with the deposit, but three people in a room was a pretty good deal.

Anyways, including the horse's supplies, I finished purchasing all the little every-day items this morning, and after finishing the meal, in another meaning we arrived at our current situation.

「Let's start by choosing from the clothes from before. I'm fine so, let's buy Ilia some.」
「Ok. I am pleased to receive clothes chosen by Ojou-sama」
「……no, Ilia. Please chose the things that you like today. I think you have something you like」

I want you to stop trying to test my sense of women's clothing.

「Is that so? I would be very pleased to receive the clothing chosen by Alice-sama.」
「Well, someday」

Maybe I should study about females a little more?
No no, what do you mean by learning a little more about females……

「——Nee-san!」

After receiving a map of the city outside the guild, while drawing near to the clothing store, a man who shouts at me as if it were a joke while approaching.
Somehow, being overly friendly with me.
Apparently not having mistaken me for someone else, without a doubt he has business with me it seems, he makes a bee-line for me.

「Um……」
「I'm following nee-san's advice, I'll show my courage and try confessing to Saira!」
「Eh!? Saira!?」

Why are you confessing to Saira thanks to me!?
……Aa! This guy, he was one of the pair that was fighting at the bar!
I see, now that I think about it the name of the girl from that time was Saira.

「You have to make a decision after all, you can't move forward or backwards otherwise」

You're saying that with a good smile but, who the heck are you?
I wonder about moving backwards though.

「I see.」
「I see?」

Why is he looking at me with that strange expression?

「I mean, that's right. Who are you?」
「Eh!? It's me onee-san, Takashi!」

「Takashi!? Japanese!?」
「No no, what are you talking about!?」

What are YOU talking about?!
I never thought I would hear that name in a different world!

「……Eeto, Takeshi-sama. Ojou-sama is about to go shipping」

For some reason Ilia answers like it's a headache and puts her hand on her head as follow up.

「A, aa! Sorry nee-san, I'm holding you up. Well, see ya!」
「E, eh……Good luck?」

Leaving while still not knowing what was going on, the boy was seen off.
Just what happened……

「Nee-san」
「Again……?」

After going with Iria go choose clothes and leaving the shop, another man calls out to me.

「Eeto, are you going to go confess to Saira too?」

I ask him casually.

「Geez, that means that guy already came?」

Fu, the man laughed clumsily

「That guy seems to have misunderstood but, I don't think there's any way that Saira would like me. Just because you spent a lot of time together with someone.」
「Haa……」

Why am I listening to other people's love afairs?

「But, I love Saira, thanks to nee-san it's become clear to me」
「I, I see.」

Saira, you sure are popular.
That kid, she seems a little younger than me…… which reminds me how old am I?
I mean, just what have I done?
A doppelganger?

「No hard feelings, welp, I'm going too」
「A, please wait a moment!」
「?」
「What is your name?」

The boy's clumsy smile widens and answered

「It's Kenji」

His dashing retreating figure is pointlessly cool.
I should have asked if I should sing the Japanese national anthem.

Now, although such strange coincidences happened, today's main dish has yet to end.

Moving to a different clothing shop, standing in front of the shop, we've finally arrived.

「Because it's such a rare chance, I'd like for Ojou-sama to choose for me. Please, by all means.」
「Me, here!?」

If that was going to be the case, wouldn't it have been better to choose the clothes earlier!?
What a blunder!

「Um…… Is it too much to request after all?」
「No! Please don't make that face, Iria!? I really think that Iria is really important to me. So you are prohibited from putting yourself down ok?」

I do not wish to see such a gloomy face.

Which reminds me, recently she hasn't shown me that kind of face, which makes me feel even worse.

「Ojou-sama……I am unworthy of your words」
「No. I am the one that's sorry…… there are a few circumstances」

There, for some reason Ilia looks at my chest.
Then looked at her own chest.
And once more looks at my chest.

「Compared to me I Ojou-sama is more lovely……」
「I'm not worried about THAT what-so-ever!?」

What do you mean by misunderstanding.
I should have packed in more dreams……(EN: If you don't get it, Iria was comparing bust sizes. And Alice meant she should have made them bigger)

There are more than I thought, although it is very rude to this world, the clothing, even the underwear, it can't be compared to my former world, is the impression I had looking around the shop.
As expected there wasn't anything you could consider as Japanese modern clothing but, it was fantasy like, there were a lot of likable designs too.
It's good that these aren't cosplay.
They can be worn openly.
By the way, my everyday clothes are high-laced work boots and black knee-socks.
Along with a mainly pale green, short sleeve one piece, and a slightly orangy-white overskirt.
A limp leather sack rolled into a belt that hung at my waist, it was refreshing.
They were the clothes that Onee-chan had selected.
Onee-chan recognized me as being part of the cute group right, that's right.

And returning to reality——
Inside of the store, lay the tempting lingerie.

I haven't even done anything wrong, why am I being blamed?

「……By the way, apart from the designs, I don't understand sizes」

That's why it's better to choose it yourself?
I path was cutoff and I hit the counter.

「I see, well then Ojou-sama. Would you measure my size?
「……Eh?」
Would you measure my size?
How strange. Does this conversation happen often between men an women?

I don't want to be a criminal……

「Fufu……」
「Eh?」
「No, it's just that Ojou-sama's troubled face was so cute. It was really hard to restrain my laughter just now.」

Ha?

「Since just now?」
「More accurately, ever since we started shopping today」

A devilish smile floated on Ilia's face.

What, did you say…?

「It was a plot wasn't it?」
「Yes my lady. Fufu.」

There are no feelings of respect at all!?

「Ojou-sama is so very pure. Even I'll become shy.」
「There are some things called unavoidable circumstances」
「Is that so? Fufu」

Iria was a bad girl, was the story……
After that, she chose her own underwear.
And they lived happily ever after——

「Shall we choose Ojou-sama's now?」
「I'm fine for now thanks!」
「Fufu, next time someday.」
「……」

How strange, what is Ilia to me……?
Well, whatever.
Anyway, we're setting off for the royal capital tomorrow.
It's mainly for safety and to escape, well it's also to have fun after all.

It's the Royal Capital after all.
There's also the tournament too, but the reason for entering has disappeared but I'm still interested.
Shall we consult Til?

Thus the 3 days in Rufin ended.

After that, I think all that is left is to see Saira.

Towards the Capital

Once the shopping was done I had went to meet up with Saira but Blacksmith-san told me that Saira has gone somewhere/elsewhere.
But because he signed as a proxy, the job was completed.
Although I have a little feeling that he felt a little annoyed.

「Damn, It 's all Takeshi and Kenji's fault.」
「Karma circulates, Ojou-sama」
「What kind of punishment is that!?」

What do you know, IIya !?

「It's a joke 。 I believe Ojou-sama actions are very kind 」
「Hearing about what I don't remember from someone else is scary… 」
「That's true …… That is the wrong way to go about it」

Why is she blushing?

「Ahh, whatever. After dropping by the guild let's head back to our inn. After all we are leaving early tomorrow.」

Although it is a shame, I don't have any regrets.
Although it was only for a little while, I was able to visit Saira while doing our errands.
IIya and I left the Blacksmith forge.
See you later Saira.

When we returned to the inn, a nude child was just exiting our bathroom.
As she had let down her usual twin tails, I couldn't immediately recognise her.
That deep ocean blue eyes and lovely pointy ears.
Rinnal-like cheeks with lesser dreams packed in the chest than me. (TL: Author specifically said Rinnal-like cheeks so I chose to follow instead of using Rosy cheeks)
If you see these features, it becomes very obvious.

「Wh… What! water is still dripping off you! Please don't make the room wet! Til!」
「Hmm……？」
With the towel hanging from her head, without properly wiping her body, she left the bathroom, dripping water all over the room.
Moreover, walking around the house like that!
Ahh, what's this. This is getting on my nerves!

「Ahh, enough! Please! Do not move away from the mat!」
「He..Hey! Can you stop?」

I forced the wet culprit back to the mat and snatch her towel off her and quickly dried her head. For now I'll just wipe down her body and I will dry her hair one more time.

「Mou……Please do not act like a child, Til」
「Tsk… Fussy lass」

How should I say, I cannot see you as anything else but a child.
It seems I forgot to keep my behavior in line.

「Umu. But it's not bad」

In resignation, Til relaxed and left her body in my care.

「Ok Ok、Please be patient and do not lean against me. My clothes are getting wet」
I carefully dry her hair.
She has really beautiful hair and because of the length, caring for it must be a little difficult.
I fully understand her pain for I also have difficulties with my hair.
Furthermore, Til is a sloppy person.

「Later we will use a wind crystal to dry you, otherwise you will catch a cold, Okay?」
「I will leave it to you」

As the name wind crystal suggests it is a magical stone which creates wind.
Although fire and wind crystal are originally are made using magic crystal,

due to alchemist's refinement, methods to produce various effects have been invented.
It's possible to say that an Alchemist is similar to a Scientist as they share similar goals of seeking the truth after thorough research.
…… Truth/ reality
Those words remind me of that woman.

「——Libra, who is she?」
「——」

Til stiffened.

「It does not concern you. Don't you worry 」
「If she is taken care of, I will be happy.」

I recalled yesterday's landslide.
Did I think too much?
Did I see an illusion?
Whether it is the truth or not, I don't know.

But I am feeling uneasy
Hasn't she already set her sights on me?
After thinking about it, I shivered.
How long have I been targeted?
Was it a coincidence?
Even Til does not seems to worry too much about where I came from.But why did that woman…?

「Are you afraid of her? Alice. Looking from your perspective, you are not to blame. If I were to battle with her, you got to run away at full speed.」
「Running away……」
「Right now, you can't possibly defeat her」

From Til's point of view, there is a power difference between me and Libra. Certainly, just being stared at by that pair of red eyes, I get the ominous feeling of being possessed by a shinigami.

「Do you know her well, Til? 」
「……Sigh. Even if I were to hid it, it's for naught. That lass is my first disciple, Alice. Your sister.」

Disciple?
Til's disciple?
The person chosen by the kind Til to be a disciple …. did such a thing?
When I recalled Rinnal's incident, I become nauseous.
I felt sick just remembering what happened in Rinnal.

「As you can see, It's due to my misconduct that it happened. Therefore I will end it.」
「Finish it huh…」

Does she plan to kill her?
Even her own disciple?

「……Til, are you sure?」
「It's neither good nor bad. Nevertheless, it's all in the past, and it's something I have to do. That's all there is to it.」

I don't doubt her.
It's probably obvious.
It's because, Til is different from a novice like me.
However……

「Your eyes seem sad.」

I dropped onto my knees in front of Til and matched our eye level.
Within that deep sea of blue, hid some flickers of uncertainty; I immediately understood.

「You fool! You greenhorn. Don't say cheeky things about what you don't understand」
The comforting look Til gave me after saying that made my heart hurt a little.
Say, Til?
Am I that women's substitute?
However, I did not say those words out loud.

*

The next day, Til snuck into my bed again half-asleep making me feel complicated. So I hugged her tightly and went to sleep. As usual, I was awakened unreasonably and went to prepare for the journey
We quickly put our luggage into the carriage and left Rufin before dawn. Although I am worried about not being able to meet Saira one last time, it is also rude to turn up so early in the morning.

「Let's depart.」
「Yes, please.」

After spreading straw on the floor of the carriage, there is nowhere more comfortable to sit.
By all means, please.
Til pulled the carriage reins and we departed toward the royal capital.
Farewell, Rufin
I had lots of fun.

「———Alice～～～～ San. Please! Bring me along!」

We heard a voice as we were leaving.
Before, we left the street.
Saira, who was out-of breath, ran through the main street while carrying a large amount of luggage.

「Oh dear oh dear」

Although she answered without energy, Til did stop the carriage properly despite her lack of enthusiasm.
I alighted from the carriage and waited for Saira to catch up.

The luggage on her back seems really heavy.
It is not like that she does not appear to be running away from home
Well I never. So it is that sort of things huh…

「Haa Haaa、Alice-san、I want you to take me with you……」
「Saira, is that okay?」
「Yes, I had properly told Master yesterday. 」

As she catches her breath she looks up at me, her eyes are brimming with determination.
I guess I don't have to ask questions about her resolve from now on.

「I understand. Likewise, I want you to lend me your strength, Saira.」
「Yes！ In order to become Alice-san 's strength, I will try my best nya!」

Her hat moves as if it's jumping when she gives her energetic reply.
I guess full of vitality best describes her.
Our travel companions has increased by one

However, it will be bad if I don't protect her.
She is different from Til, IIya and Onee-chan.

「I will protect you. From now on, please take care of me」
「Uuu, I am happy nya…」

I tilted my head when the blushing Saira carelessly forgot to add in desu.
Speaking of which, I wonder if Takeshi and Kenji are fine.
I wonder what had happened after that but it's rude to ask.
Saira is a bad girl.

「In that situation, who is crueler?…」
IIya murmured beside me.
Ehh? It's not… Saira??

Name：Saira
Race：Beast Tribe/ Beastman
Gender：Female
Age：14
Occupation：Blacksmith
Lv: 1

I confirmed Saira's status.
As expected, there are no astonishing information obtained.
Speaking of which, in Saira's stats. Instead of having intelligence. she seems to have 5 points in blacksmith.

In the carriage, I enquired IIya who was sitting on my left.
Saira who was on my right, look at me passionately.

How should I put it, why am I surrounded?
There is still extra space in the carriage, so it would be better to sit comfortably.

If we stick that close together, I will get a little *dokidoki* (TL: Excited)

「Those who have combat skills points, if they put 5 out of 10 attribute points into intelligence, they will be shunned. For those people who like Saira who are looking towards being a crafter,it depicts a situation where 10 points is not enough.」
「Oh, really?」

In short, like this huh….
Strength 1　Stamina 1　Defense 1　Agility 2　Intelligence 0

「Although it will be difficult for these people to specialise in combat, they may excel in occupations other than combat. In Saira's case, it's Blacksmithing. 」
「Yes, I am embarrassed.」

I see. If you change into another class other than the combat class, the intelligence will disappear and the class's unique attribute will be added. However, it is impossible for Saira to retrieve those attribute points again.

In order to be able to do smithing, I will buy a house in the royal capital. In addition, I will buy tools too. Basically, it looks like Saira will concurrently be the caretaker of the house.
Well, if I hesitate, Saira will not be able to do smithing.

「Yeah! At the royal capital, our most important objective is to work and buy a house 」
「A house huh. An excellent goal, Alice-sama」
「Thank you. It will be inconvenient if we do not have a house to stay together.」
「Even if just a little, I want to be useful ….」

Saira responded in a depressing manner.
I see. If you do not have an environment to practice smithing, there is nothing you can do.
Unexpectedly, it is an urgent problem
We will release Saira from her anguish.
I can imagine the pain of not being able to do anything she has to go through.

Ahh, let me see..

「IIya, has the rewards for the tournament been announced?」
「Hmm. I heard you get a sizeable monetary award. You will also obtain a slave as an extra prize.」
「Ahh, I remind you of some unpleasant memories. I am sorry.」
「Fu Fu. Ojou-sama. Please do not mind me too much. Ojou-sama has her own position. 」
「Although that's okay」
「You can't. Although I do get carried away sometimes, I must abide to our master~ servant relationship.」

As I thought, IIya is serious.
After thinking about why I say such things again, I believe it is to let Saira to understand the current situation.

Whatever….
IIya, so stoic.

We continued chatting till evening and reached today's campsite. It is on the coast of a big river.
As I had planned the journey with Til in advance, the place look just like the map.
Just as planned.

「Okay, Let's camp here. Alice, today I will train you today.」
「Til will? 」
「Yes, on top of the river.」

The place she pointed to is the calming flowing river.
Ehh?
On top of the river?

「Ehh, in-water combat?」
「Don't speak nonsense, obviously it's on top of the water!」

On-water combat… If that's the case..
I am aware that I could not calm down as I thought about the master who talks about such high level stuffs again.

In short…
I wanted to show Til my good side.

(TL note: Previously Til's dialouge are all translated to *shakespeare* English. Her way of speaking is like an loli-baba. I did not follow it this time round. But do let me know which do you prefer.)

Glimpse

Til was standing still on the water and closed her eyes waiting for me.

She was standing on water hardened by blizzard.
Ice magic has more practical use than I thought.
Can I do it?
If I can adjust it well, it's not like I can't do it with lightening magic.

Right now, I'm not releasing all my powers in one go to fly. However, it seems that I could do it too if I were to regulate my powers carefully.
Although I cannot make footholds in thin air, if it's on the water…

「It's okay. Before the right leg sinks in, you have to step out with your left leg」

What the. Isn't it easy?
……
Is it easy?

「Alice sama, Please try your best!」
「Do your best!」

Voices of encouragement can be heard as I was hesitating at the river banks.
Their encouragements cheered me up but also added more pressure on me.
I unintentionally tried to turn my back towards them.

「……」
「Alice-sama?」
「Alice-san, is something wrong?」

Curious expressions surfaced on their faces.
After looking at both of them, my stiffened face relaxed.
I felt the burden on my shoulders lessen.
Therefore, it's amazing.

I think I can do my best.
I stared at Til who is standing on the water once again.

「Alri~ght!! I am coming, Til!」

After proclaiming to Til, I stepped out my right leg
I regulate Thunder on my feet and gently stepped on the water.

It's before my battle with Til, therefore I felt my nervousness reach it's peak.
After stepping on the water, I carefully applied my weight on it.

——I can do it?

Once I felt that it can withstand my weight, I took my next step in 1 go.

「Wah wah!」

As I thought, maintaining your balance is difficult!

My feet are unsteady.
As my body falls , I naturally stepped out my left leg.
And I put in too much magic power.
I stepped forward as if I was jumping.
In panic, I stepped forward again with my right leg.
This time round, it was too weak.
I felt that I was sinking.
Therefore, I hurriedly step forward with my left leg again.

「Teh, I will simply run with all my might!!」

However, I cannot stop.
Once I stop, I will sink

「Til!! Let's start the test!! Immediately!! Now!!」

As I ran towards Til who was standing quietly on the water, trying to appeal her to start the test.
It might just end before the test starts!

「Thou are a noisy lass.—— Blizzard」
「Wai- ！」

Oh my!!
It becomes too much all of a sudden?!
As Til sleepily chants the spell for blizzard, my surroundings began to hail.
That range!!

The blue ice became sharp bullets and bombarded the area around me.
But, is it still in the range of lower class magic?
Thanks to my magic defense, I can withstand it.

「——tsu」

Immediately, I received a strong feedback and jumped back.
I retreated out of the AOE as the attack was too strong.
I had moved according to my instinct.
The opponent isn't a thief….

「What's wrong? Aren't thou far away?」

Tillbell Einsaura (Tln: This makes the most sense)
The witch of ice and snow huh…

「…. I will say it frankly. My body is not listening to me. It's terrifying.」

I tried saying it frankly.
Well, it really is like that.
As usual, I confess while increasing the distance by running away from Til.

「Thou art honest. However Alice? Thou art going to be working as an adventurer, dost thou not believe thou shalt not meet an opponent stronger than thyself?」

「That's……」
「As thy opponent is me, it's impossible. After giving up, will thee turn thou back to me? Sure enough, it is just a forgivable rosy situation no?」
「Certainly……」

Once more, I face toward to the river bank.
During the crucial moments, I hate myself for being unable to protect the people I want to protect.

「Will it be okay if I go at you seriously?」
「Kufu, Thou art afraid I might die?」
「It was a foolish question」

I kicked the water surface and jumped.
During the duration of the flight, I invoke my offensive magic.
Like Til, as I am unable to double cast, it is inconvenient.

「Descend from heaven a blade of light!! Become my sword and tear the darkness！　Lightning！」

From my right hand, I release my intermediate tier magic at Til.
Hesitating against Til is ridiculous.

「——Blizzard」

In my lightning's line of fire, Til erects countless walls of ice.
My lightning was stopped by that wall and disappeared before it could reach Til.

「Hou?? You destroyed eight of them huh…」

After looking at the shattered ice walls, Til called out to praise me.
—— However, I was too preoccupied to listen to her.
My strongest attack.

「Careless of me……」

My attack has been blocked.
Blizzard?
My attack has been block by Blizzard?
That low-tier magic…
No no. Although it is my impression, but it can also be use for defense. What an all purpose magic.

「Watto」

I paid attention to my landing and used magic to reduce my falling speed and stand on the water.

Refocus
I thought to myself as my legs stabilized

「It's cold, it's cold!!!」

Before I was aware, the water surface froze completely and my legs has been lodged in the ice!.

「This time, try receiving my magic.」

I am unable to run away?!
What an S!

「Blizzard」

This time, a single aim!
That amount of power must be huge.
It's bad!
As long as it's similar to the previous AOE, I do not have the confidence to endure it.
I can only rely on simple magic to defend…… *Stabbed*!

「I hate pain!!」
「What the.. If you are a girl, things like this will happen. 」

So you endure it?!

I mean, this has nothing to do with that!
Let's go let's go says Til whose magic is still dancing in her palms as she threatens to proceed attacking me.
So skillful!!

「In the worst case if I don't heal up —— Instant death 」

and so I try to surrender

「-ait, wait wait!!」

My pleas were in vain and blizzard was released.
What a slow speed.
For now, let's use this chance?
My opponent has not even moved a single step and she cannot escape from my attack, but even my strongest attack has been blocked.
Despite the hopeless difference in ability, must I move forward and fight?

「——The answer is YES!!」

It's just that my stance looks uncool.
I can only try what I can only do.
Til's Ice magic is terrifying.
However, I have a feeling that my magic is able to break her defense
I gazed at the looming Ice hammer and adjusted my breathing.

「*Break the limit* Light Enchant!」 TL: I really want to put bankai

On Til's ice sword, I forcefully enchant it with thunder element.

「——Hou?」

This is my last trick!!

「THUNDERRR！！」

My thunder magic struck the ice bullet.
The ice bullet which was struck by my thunder magic slowed down quickly
However, do not think that that's the end, Til!

「GOOO!!」

I will force back Til's magic!
It's heavy!

clenched one's teeth
Link to the expression
http://dic.nicovideo.jp/a/%E3%81%90%E3%81%AC%E3%81%AC
This is the place I will win!

「——Kuhhh.. LIGHTNING!!」

Consecutive invocation
Thanks to the ice foothold, there is no need for double cast!!
My intermediate tier magic has been unleashed and finally the bullet was repelled and was heading toward Til.
However, Til did something like a jump and the bullet was easily avoided.
Til who was floating in the air.

「This much of a chance is over! 」

At any rate, I have such great admiration for Til, no matter what amazing thing Til does is more than I can imagine.
If that's the case, she can naturally cope with such unexpected situations.

「THUNDER!!」

I did not just attack in a straight line.
I caste Thunder around Til who is escaping in the air.
However, I must try my best against Til who can build ice walls in any direction.

It's not over yet

The image I have of Til, will not lose to this kind of standard!
As I could not remove my feet from the ice, I fly towards Til together with the ice.

「How about close combat! Til!」

I clad my palms with lightning and thrust towards Til forcefully.

Thunder palms. TL: wtf.

Let's use my trump, I thought to myself. Once

「——Kufu, I don't hate it.」
「Ha——？」

The smiling Til struck my arm from below as I was thrusting out my palm and diverted the strike.
My stance was destroyed perfectly
Leaving that aside, consecutive invocation has caused me to use magic beyond my limit and I went headlong into the river. Til was really not holding back.

「0 guard huh? Wake me up before the preparations of dinner」

Conversely, I was fondly struck by Til's palm in the stomach and lost consciousness.

「Uuuu……」
「Alice-sama? Have you awakened?」
「This place is……」

I dazedly confirmed that I regained conscious.
It appears that I am in the tent.
I more or less understand the situation.
For some reasons, I was sleeping on Ilya's knees.

「Haaa…. How long did I sleep?」

Til is too strong……
From my experience, I felt that no matter what I did, it will be fruitless.

「Because it is just after the sun set, it hasn't been that long.」
「I see. Where are Til and Saira?」
「Oshishou-sama has set out for a bit. As for Saira, she is preparing the meals.」

I see, I must thank Saira later.
Even though the practice had begun in the evening, it's as they say, it really didn't take that long.

「Umm……」
「？」

Ilya tilted her head curiously as I called out to her.

Ilya is cute.

「Did I look uncooll?」
「Kusu」

She laughed!?

「Did you not notice? When Oshisho-sama and ojousama were fighting, she was very happy from beginning to end.」
「Ehh？」

It wasn't the case of me being too desperate.

「Additionally, when we saw Alice-sama our hearts burned with expectation. That Ojou-sama will definitely succeed Oshishou-sama someday. I strongly hold that belief.」
「Ilya……」
「I do not have thoughts like Ojou-sama being uncool and so on. Please have more confidence, my lady.」
「Uuu.. Such smooth words from Ilya made me troubled.」
「Oh? FuFu, is that so?」
「Yes, it is.」

As I am someone who can be easily cheered up, this is troubling.
However, I myself want to try to live up to that expectation.
I want to be a disciple that Til can be proud of.
I do not want to make Til regret.
That much, I strongly swear in my heart.

Twin Moons

It was the 2nd day after leaving from Rufin street.
The closer we got to the Royal Capital, the more maintained the highway appeared.
The vegetation was removed, and stones are used to pave the road.
I began to worry about the burden on the horse's legs.
However, the carriage was moving well.

「Thank you, Oji-san. Your vegetables really saved us.」
「It's okay. I received payment for it. During a journey, we need to give and take. 」

There are many carriages moving towards Rufin from here and I had just bought some vegetables from the merchant Oji-san.
Because the merchant uses Ice crystal to preserve the vegetables' freshness and move around, even if it's on the highway, the vegetables stay in stock.
Incidentally, Ice crystals are expensive.
Even cheap ice crystals are around 3000 rook.
The expenses for the journey to the Royal Capital from Rufin causes us great pain, so I will purchase them later.
To some extent, preserved food for journeys are the norm.
For this reason, a different merchant is highly regarded.

「Do you not worry about bandits? Judging from appearances, you look just like a member of the pretty Ojou-chan group.」

Are the legendary people also mixed into the group?
Such folklore.. *Fuahh* made me yawn loudly.
Even if these people get attacked by bandits, they will definitely not do anything.
Something along those lines.

「Yes, Thank you very much 」
「Oh, Ojou-chans, you girls will be headed to the Royal Capital from now

on?」
「? Yes, we are.」

We tilt our heads towards the Oji-san who started whispering to us..

「Anyway, there are rumors flying around saying that recently, the western republic has shown signs of imminent military actions. Before you girls get caught in the war, it's probably better to escape to the countryside.」

「War….」 「戦……」

War huh… 戦争？
TL: Although it's the not really the same, I believe War is the best word for both of them.

I know nothing about war except historical records and footages.
The term doesn't feel familiar to me.

「Is that so. Okay, we will be leaving. Oh! Since Ojou-chan is so cute, this is an extra service.」

I smiled as I received a Rinnal from him.

「Th… Thank you」

I bowed towards the sociable Merchant-san and waved at his departing figure.
Speaking of which, do people who bow exist in this world?
Oh my, perhaps it's different here?

「IIya, is my greeting normal?」
「No it's not. They will believe that it comes particularly from Ojou-sama's village.」

I see. I look at Saira.
Ping Ping As usual, her hat is moving.
I can't be surprised by the little things she does,

「So… What about the greetings from IIya's birthplace ?」
「——Let me see.」

As IIya speaks, she knelt on one knee infront of me.
She placed her own hand on her propped knee, reversed it and took my hand.
TL: *knight kissing a princess*

And ——

「——huh ? 」
TL: *Chuu*

The back of my hand was kissed.

「WAAAHH……」
I could hear Saira's voice from somewhere.
Til, as usual was sleepily rubbing her eyes.
My face reddened.

「This kind of feeling.」

IIya whose lips separated from my hand, took my hands and grinned at me.

「I… I see. 」

Yes, I know.
I know that!
THAT IS NOT A NORMAL GREETING!

「Alice-sama looks so cute that I'm troubled」
「……」

I know.
I was played like a fool.
That was one act from the otherwise quiet journey.

That night, while everyone was sleeping peacefully in the tent, I suddenly woke up.

When the number of people increase, I felt the tent became a little cramped.
But there are no problems for 3 people to sleep together.

Everyone is so slim.
While I'm at it, because we didn't prepare quilts/bedcovers for three people, Til and I are sleeping together.
How should I say, the person sleeping with Til has already been determined.
My body size… TL: 身体のサイズ的に……
The next shortest person is Saira. As one would expect, I cannot request her to sleep with someone who she is not acquainted well with.
Therefore, I have to do it.
It's nothing more than that.
There is no ecchi meaning to it.

「Although it is okay to hug me, but drooling on me is a little……」

She seems to be sleeping very well.
I gently separate from Til and sneak out of the tent.
After I casually looked into the tent, I notice that Saira is not there.
IIya is sleeping.
Well, although those two are sleeping soundly there is no danger.
In order not to wake both of them up, I quietly sneak out of this tent also.

The twin moons that seemed to be called Crane and Krisna floated in the night sky.
Saira who sat at a nearby rock gazed at the twin moons.
「Saira」
「Ahh…. Alice-san」

As I quietly called out to her and approached her, *Ping* her neko ears jumped.
Ohh , she removed her hat.
Although she even sleeps with her hat on.
Saira with her uncovered neko ears is more cute than usual.
Tied with a light blue ribbon, *Fuwa Fuwa* her ponytail looked really fluffy.
Compared to her working attire, this is more like her standard hairstyle.
But, it suits her.

「May I sit next to you?」
「Please. Uu, I am embarrassed nyaa……」

Why…?
Come to think of it, since when was I able to naturally sit next to her? How should I put it, I am already used to it.
I thought as Saira made space for me to sit.

The rock we sat on was perfect in size.
Without holding back, she let me sit beside her.

「Unable to sleep？」

「Yes, …. I was worried about what Merchant-san said this afternoon.」
「War？」

Her Neko ears *potan* drooped.

Cu..Cute!!!
No no, Serious talk, Serious talk…

「My hometown is on the outskirts of the republic. In a countryside district…….」
「……I see」
「Yes…. You may know, but the beast tribe has been discriminated in the royal capital. However, if it's the republic, I feel ashamed……」
「……」

The expression on Saira's face as she looked at the moon, looked downcast, just like her neko ears.

「Therefore, when the war starts… The ones being forced to stand at the front lines are definitely my kin.」
「……」
「Ahh.. That!! It's not like it will be okay if the humans are in front! That…. How should I say it?」
「I know. It's because I know.」

Ponpon I brushed her head.

「A… Alice-san. Are you not concerned about my… ears?」

Is she wondering if I discriminate?

To ask someone like me from the parallel world; I believe the beast tribe is something refreshing to me and it's impossible for me to discriminate against them.
So that's the reason why this kid has never removed her hat.
Master-san is a really magnanimous person.
Just what did you do to make Master-san not get upset and allow you to become independent and join me to go to the Royal Capital?

「I think you look super cute. To be able to become my imouto, I am also super happy.」
「Ahhh……」

I am sorry, Saira
My eyes are good so your blushing face is completely visible
「That… I didn't meant to hide it.However, after so long, I was able to spill my troubles out completely… My troubles… 」
「FuFu, Please don't worry. My decisions will never change. Just like what I had said to you previously, I want you to become my smith.」
「Alice-san……」

As Saira hung her head in shame, I on the contrary looked up to the moon.
I ignored the weeping sounds that can be heard and continued to *ponpon* caress her head.

「There is no need to fight against evil, for I will shoulder everything. This is because Saira is already like my family member.」

I do not intend to console her.
I will definitely not turn back on my words.
I will take responsibility for those words.

「Uuu, Uuu」 *crying sounds*

Are there really no evil intents?
I really can't see those kind of eyes. I want to crush that depressed feeling.

「Uuu, *Zuhii*, your clothes, I am sorry」ずびっ～*sniff* うぅ～*cry*
「Ahh, It's okay. It's okay.」

Clinging and crying on me. For the sake of protecting her honor, I allowed her to cry on me..
However, my clothes had already been dirtied by Til's drool.
It has been a long time since I let someone do as one pleases.
After a significant amount of time has passed, Saira finally stood up and laughed as she rubbed her teary-red eyes.

「It's… It's embarrassing nya…….」
「Fufu, probably..」
「Uu……」

She felt a little better, I guess?

「Ahh, speaking of which, there should be someone who likes Saira, right?」
「EH!?」

I remembered Takeshi and Kenji.
Once again, Saira's face reddened.

「Th.. that… From when I was younger, I got along with someone. And he was gentle with me… I was really happy. But…」

She did not want to bother them huh….
How should I say, I understood her later words.

「You worry too much.」

Unfortunate.
Takeshi, Kenji
Your actions were definitely not useless
At least, you guys definitely protected Saira's heart.

Ahhh. in this world, there are not many handsome guys.
I must not give up.

「nnhh？」

Hmm?
So, why did Saira come to me?
But as I do not want to annoy her, I kept to it myself.
As I looking at Saira curiously, it seemed like she had something she wanted to convey to me.
She was in a fluster, shaking her head and wringing her hands.

「Er…erm, Th.. That… Alice-san.. In the den.」
「Den？」

About the landslide?
Although in an unexpected life-and-death situation

「……Because you are like my Onii-chan」
「——」

My heart raced.

「It's.. It's different! Alice-san. You are definitely not tomboyish!! I swear! Not even a single particle of you is manly nya!」 TL: if you wish, you can change particle into part.
「I know, therefore please calm down!!. Either way, I feel depressed」

Man, what should I do…
If I throw away my identity, it's also troublesome that way.

「Erm.. The atmosphere is…」
「？」
「Nothing… I like the moons very much」

After changing the topic, Saira once again look up at the night sky.

「Twin Moons？」
Being attracted to it, I too look up at the sky.

「My close siblings seemed really happy chasing after me.If I ever get depressed, I will always look at the night sky to cheer up.」
「I see.」
Not bad, Moon-san

「However, from now on, I will also be here from you. Don't you forget, kay?」
「Yes! Alice-san!」

A fruitful night where I got to know a little more about Saira.
Even though it was a quiet day, that incident was quite special

We are almost at the Royal Capital.
FIGHTING!

Royal Capital Sentoria

On the fourth day in the afternoon, we reached the Royal Capital
Although we had reached our destination in three days, we arrived late at night and the day was unfortunately over. Especially, as it is said that no one enters the city in the middle of the night.
Nevertheless, the Royal Capital is splendid as expected.
Even the gate stands out from the road.
The huge fortified city is being surrounded by castle walls as far as I can see.
This doesn't mean that the residential areas in and out of the city walls are completely divided.
Those people staying out of city walls seem to be those who work primarily in the agricultural sectors or the primary sectors.
There is not much worth in sightseeing in the rural landscape other than the moving waterwheel and the feeding livestock. If you see the scenery as you travel towards the castle walls, you will understand. The residential areas out of the city walls are also surrounded by a wooden fortress. It's not really a complete castle wall though.
But, it resembles the towns I have visited.

By the way, it is possible to travel to all the way outskirts of the castle walls for free. However, if you wish to pass through the castle walls, it is a must to pay the passage fee.
It costs 100 rook per person.
It seems to be under the pretence of the castle walls' maintenance.
We received the 1 month free entry coupon,
I better make sure not to lose this, little by little our expenses are….

「Ojou-sama. This is the Aluceid kingdom royal capital. Sentoria」
「Ehh?」

As usual, Where am I?
As if she expected my question, she explains to me without me asking anything.
As expected,the origin of the name comes from a special product.
As expected, the red light district is still flourishing.
The streets were filled with the largest crowds i have ever seen in this

world
The neatly lined up buildings, made of stones and bricks, many of them are of refined and graceful taste.
Even so, as I thought, building made of wood makes up the majority of the buildings though.
But, the street is laid firmly with rocks.

「Alicee, Choose that lodgings over there. I will go and sell the horses and the carriages.」

Til pointed to the lodging signboard as she speaks.

「Eh!? You are selling them?」
「Aren't we going to be setting down in the royal capital for a little while? If that's the case, it is better to have lesser baggages. In addition, taking care of them is going to be troublesome.」
「I… I see.」

I unintentionally look at the horses.
It's round eyes seems really cute.

「I see. The next owner will also love you too.」

I caress the two horses whom I have made friends with.
After which, I gave each horse each one of the remaining rinnals.
munch munch as the horses stuff their cheeks.

「You seem really lively. Tarou, Jirou」
「……They have names now?」
「I just gave them.」
「That's right. Ojou-sama's naming sense is very unique.」
TL: this is a very polite sentence from IIya.

Although it is regretful, I took only the necessary luggage from the carriage and sold the rest.

「Don't you worry.I will not mistake the selling place.」

Til smiled bitterly at the worried-looking me as she answered.

「Yes……」

I am really okay, I guess?
I clasp my hands together to wish for the well-being of the horses who are being pulled at the reins by Til.
So after that, I immediately chose the lodgings and brought the luggages into the room.
As one would expected there are no rooms that can fit 4 person. Therefore, I chose 2 twin rooms.
The lodging expenses is 200 rook per person.
Well, the Royal Capital is a little more expensive as compared to Rufin. But, it can't be helped.
The segregation of the rooms is me and Saira.
IIya and Til.

By the way, how's everyone relationship going?
When we were resting in our room respectively, I suddenly became concerned.

「Say, Saira? How do you find Til?」
「Oshishou-sama?」

Oshishou-sama?
Since IIya calls her that, it become like that huh.

「She is an elf. Although this is my first time seeing, I am really thankful for it.」

Saira whose eyes were sparkling answered lively.
I see. It seems like there are no problem at all.

「So, what about IIya?」
「Ehh!? Erm… Sometimes she looks terrifying nya.. The cutlery in the bar…」
TL note: IIya stab through the gaps of the guy's fingers in the bar when he tried to pick Alice up.
「Cutlery?」

Did such a thing happen?

「Terrifying?」
「It's.. It's different. Really different! I find that she is a great person. However, I find it difficult to approach her. She is just too perfect.」

IIya, hard to approach huh..?
Certainly, she has the feeling of a flawless beauty, however…

「Fumu. Certainly, that girl has her malicious moments. Therefore she probably needs some scolding..」
「No. I believe that's is only reserved for Alice-san. Basically, IIya is kind.」
「EHH!?」

What's the meaning of this malicious intents primarily targeted at me.

「Eto.. Uhmm. Alice-san.. I… love you nya.」
「……」

Hu… Huh?
It seems like I am being confessed by a girl….(ED: beginnings of a Yuri harem?)

「I.. I see. Thank you. I am really happy. 」

However, when I was cooling off my head a little from the girl-to-girl relationship. But to say that you hold some feelings of attraction to me.
No matter what, by my guys's feelings, I am completely captured so I am not trouble.
「Em.. Embarrassing nya. 」
「Although there is nothing to be shy about.」

I caress her head and her neko ears.
What a blissful touch.
After I enjoyed that feeling for a while, I finally released Saira.
Saira collapsed onto the bed faced down and completely hid her head under the pillow.
I guess I played with her too much.
For now, I sat down on the chair in the room and tried taking out the money from the leather bag.
Even though buying a house is unreasonable, i must lease a house for

lodging fees are expensive.
Within the 8 gold coins I posses, there are some bronze coins.
It seems like I have spent almost 3 gold coins.
Travel expenses and clothes are purchases that are necessary, therefore, it can't be helped.
However, we have become a large family so just like that 1 gold coin seems to vanish.
In a family of 4, it's normally unreasonable to spend 3 gold coin in a year.
Circumstances have been fairly tough.
Hypothetically speaking, with your own house, if one does not travel a lot, and not eating out everyday and save by having home made meals… Well, personally, I do not dislike it but … now it has become a must.
Of course, luxury goods are unjustifiable.
Also the loss of 1 gold coin is painful but as expected if I have 8 gold coins, it will be alright for now.
Let's go and save it up in the guild.
Otherwise…

「Tournament……」

If I were to win, I will gain a sizeable sum of money.
From what I had heard the opening period is about 1 week.
During that period, I must gather information.
Firstly… the guild??

「Saira, I will be stepping out for a bit. Saira can also move around freely till evening.」

Okay!

「Are you carrying money?」
「I am okay. i am carrying a bit」
「I see, let's meet up at this room in the evening.」
「Please take care! Alice-san」

I lightly wave back at her and left the room
Okay! What shall I do now?
After being with me for a while, Ilya is also tired and wishes to stretch out in the bed.

As I knocked on the next door, Ilya immediately came out.

「Ojou-sama , where are you going? 」
「I am thinking of going to the guild. Although I had told Saira, but Ilya is also free to move about till evening. 」
「If that's the case, I will also be with Ojou-sama. Is there anything you don't understand?」

N..No.
I think I seem awfully unreliable.
No less than than Onee-chan's excessive care?
One thing or another, as Shion-san let me go out to the street alone.

「It's okay! I am also Til's disciple. I will not be defeated easily. 」
「No, It's not about that. I say that Ojou-sama has a little too much openings… Thanks to your feminine charm, I am worried for you.」
「It's about that!?」
「There are various kinds of danger in the city, Ojou-sama.」
「It seems like you are preaching to a kid!?」

My self awareness of being a female huh…
If my feminine side grows, my masculine side weakens. Therefore my spirit seems to be collapsing.

「At any rate, I am moving alone today. Is that okay, Ilya?」
「くすっ、イエス、マイ、レディ」
「*Kusu*, yes my lady」
TL: *short laugh*

I guess she was alerted and quickly concedes to my request.

「… Is Ilya going anywhere? I will pass you some money in advance.」
「I see. I guess I wish to check out the current situation of the royal capital. On the way here, there are some troubling reports. 」

About war huh..
It certainly cannot be disregarded.
If Ilya checks for me, it will be a great help.

「As I don't have any loose change, I will pass u a gold coin in advance.」
「Ojou-sama trusts me too much that it's dangerous.」

Ilya smiles bitterly at me as she took the coin.
「If anything happens, my eyes will get cloudy. Please help yourself.」
「……Ojou-sama, sometimes you say things that made me startled」

I reflexively reach out my hands towards the slightly blushing Ilya's beautiful face
I cupped her glossy cheeks with my outstretched hands.

「……If you betray me, I will punish you, you know? 」 *love*
「I am looking forward to it a little.」
「Baka」

Although it's regretful, she replaced me and left the house.
After that small incident, the atmosphere seems to become weird.

———— and the incident escalated quickly after I left the left the room moving towards the guild
Ahhh, Ilya is going to be mad….

「Hora!! Please hurry! THE THIEF IS ESCAPING!」
「Ehhh.. Okay.」

Why is it that even though I was not requested, I still chase the thief.
I reach out to the girl wearing a expensive looking dress with a eye catching characteristic pink hair.
Her hair done in a bun to the side.
How should I say. From my one-sided knowledge of present times, that girl certainly.. a noble?
This development is indescribable.. but for now.

「Hey. i am Alice. May I know you name?」
「I am sorry. My name is Francesca Will.. Ahh, No. It's Francesca 」
….Suspicious.
More suspicious than a thief.
「Francesca sama? Nice to meet you.」

「It's okay to address me normally, Alice. Well, please take care of me」

As it is, I can't understand the situation at all. In order to chase the thief, we ran through the back alleys of the royal capital.

At that time, curiously I felt that it is not a smart move…

The Capital's Darkness

Moving back time a little.
After I left the room and jogged down the street looking for the guild.
I know it's good if I slow down and walk and look around but as for now there are tons of shops around.

Restaurants, General Stores, Clothing shops, Arms and Protector stores, blacksmithing.. If I enumerate the list, it is going to be endless.
From daily living to adventures, they have everything. That kinda feeling.

However, to take for example the weapons shop, there are countless of them. Trying to compare them is also probably going to be interesting.
But, how can we tell which stores are for beginners?

Is there any building that looks like the guild house?
I can't recklessly enter the buildings as well.

「~ng？」

The incident happened while I was strolling aimlessly trying to find the guild.
On the street right ahead of me, three guys crashed through the crowd and ran with hats concealing their faces.
Behind them are a bunch of people brandishing their weapons chasing after them.

The escaping suspicious people and the chasing troops of knights?

A large scale round up in broad daylight?

「Step aside!」

Brandishing their knives, the three man group forces the crowd to scatter, paving a way for them.

The crowd parting like Moses' miracle was a strangely spectacular sight.
(ED:Moses parts the red sea in the Bible)

Me doing nothing about it is uncool/terrible.
However, raising such a ruckus right here in the middle of the town, where the heck are they planning to run away to?

Approaching the corner, this one time I let it slide.
—— But.. when I saw a kid fall down after being pushed by the crowd, I started to rethink. .

「….To pointlessly injure people, even if there is a reason it's not something I can accept now is it.」

Using my magic is also bad.
There might possibly be an accomplice hidden among the people in the street.

If that's the case…
I manipulate my magic and kick off the ground.
With my starting agility, the effect is amazing in combination with thunder magic.

In an instant, I caught up with the group of three.
As the path was opened, there were no obstacles. So it was easy.
With that force, I rammed into one of them from the back.

「Guah!!」

In the midst of running away at full speed. the suspicious guy ended up being rammed defencelessly from the back and tumbled spectacularly.
With just a fleeting glance, the remaining two of them quickly ran past him.

"What should I do?", I thought to myself. But the suspicious guy who tumbled stood up holding a knife. Therefore, I can't move off from here.

I immediately strike his back with my palm.
…Coated with thunder element.

「Gii!?」 TL: SFX

Although I tried my best to go easy on him, he fainted.
I see. Well, something like a stun gun, i guess.
I don't quite understand it and not killing is just perfect for me.
(ED: Alice did not realize the thunder she was using to move would also act like a stun gun)
If I use 「Thunder」 to attack, even if I go easy, I get the feeling that I will kill him.
And thinking about it over and over again, as expected, Thunder attribute suits my character.
Using the image of thunder circulating through your body, you can lower the consumption rate.
(ED: Athletes use visualization, seeing the action in their mind, to better their performance. Same thing here)

It is economical.
If I become proficient in regulating my output, looks like I will be able to cope with drawn-out battles.
What the.. it's easier than expected.

「……As expected, the opponent during the journey is too tough huh..」

Completely unable to compete with me huh..
If you were to consider him as standard, I have a feeling I will be able to deal with most issues

「——You! Are you okay!?」

「Ahh….」

During the time he was stunned, we are surrounded by the chasing party of knights.
From the atmosphere, my eyes happen to meet the girl's in pink hair who seems to be leading those knights.

The colour of her pupils are purple.
Hanging on her eyes, in particular, below her left eye, there is a black mole.
It strangely fits her…
Somewhat erotic~ish.

「This….. Are you the one who did this?」

「Ummm… it was just a coincidence… When I took my leg out it got caught.」

「……」

「……」

Such an excuse is not accepted at all?
Not accepted at all huh…

「Restrain this suspicious person and send him back to the guardroom. I will chase after the rest with this person.」

「Ehh!?」

Although I was surprised, the knights were more surprised than me.

「Hime-sama!?」

And also, I was even thinking and hoping someone would just blurt it out.

「Let's go!!」

「Wa~!!!」
ED: Shortened form for wait.

I whose arm was pulled, was unable to refuse her. In addition, I was unsure of the current situation and was added to the hunting party.

And we arrive to our current situation.

「Proceed without hesitation to the back alleys after…those thieves」

Immediately after the capture of that person, we begin the delayed pursuit of the remaining two into the alleys of the royal capital.
Different from the main street, the dim street we are currently in is narrow and surrounded by buildings.

There are not many people but, the tired-looking guy in tattered clothes was huddling in a corner, the poor looking guys in a group whispering with their backs to us. A place which made me super tense.

In front of me pulling my hand is a girl who is worthy of being called brave. Although Francesca's running speed is not slow, but neither is it fast as well.

Probably, Agility 2?
We will never catch up that way.

Also, no matter how many times you say, running long distance is impossible for me!

「Fr.. Francesca! Please hold on! We will catch up in one shot!」

「Ehh? What do you mean?」

Explaining is hard, therefore, I embraced her.

「Kyaaa!! Buuu. Impolite….」

Before she could finish her words, I used my magic power and jumped.
Due to the sudden lack of footholds, Francesca felt insecure and hugged me too.

It's helpful.
My strength is non-existent, therefore jumping while embracing Francesca is frankly tiring.

For the sake of the girl's honour, she is slim and by no means fat.
ED: Women care about weight hence honor but it's essentially saying she is heavy and carrying her is tiring.

Somehow or another, we have suddenly decreased the distance between us and the thieves.

「Awesome… desuwa~」

Despite not being able to hear her murmur, the thieves turned back to verify the situation. When they saw us, they frantically escape into the side street.
Or rather, isn't that a 90 degree corner!
Drawing close to us is a huge stone wall.

Oh no. There is no reason to be crashing!!
I do not want to experience Til-tono's special training!

「~ey!!!」

I regulate the magic power on my feet and immediately decrease my speed.
Like a ninja, I experienced landing on the wall.
And I re-regulate my power again and jump off one more time!

CHECKMATE!

We jumped over the thieves.

「——Now!! Descend, Alice!」

Without waiting for my reply, Francesca jumps off in mid-air to land in front of the thieves.
Landing in a splendid manner, the girl quickly draws her sword…. is that thing what they called a rapier?
She drew out her sleek sword.

「 You have come this far desuwa~! Surrender quietly,if not…. 」

Before Francesca could finish her words, both of them resolved themselves and rush in to attack.
I who doesn't know her true ability, felt a little chill in the guts. But…

「Look and experience the pain!」

Francesca without rushing, calmly took a stance.

And she stepped in earlier than a thief and stabbed his weapon hand!
That accuracy of the stab!

「Gyaaaaaaa!」

Therefore, without stopping, Francesca rotated her body smoothly like a river while drawing her rapier.
ED: drawing it out of the guy's hand

In a flash, as if she was dancing, she attacks while dodging the attack from the other thief. Making use of her centrifugal force, she visits a strike on the thief's head with the solid looking hilt of the rapier.

Anyway, the opponent's level…. That movement, the accuracy of her judgement.
Francesca…. I am not mistaken.. She is strong.

「Fuu」

The way she lightly swings her rapier and sheathes, it is magnificent.

Is that the knight's conduct?
What a different atmosphere from Shion-san and Ilya.

「Do not shout. Facing me with your weapons, do you regret it desuwa~? Am I wrong?」

Francesca declared coldly to the writhing thief whose hand was pierced
I who landed slightly away from the scene, approach the girl's side after the dust has settled and looked at the thieves.
The thief who fainted after getting hit on the head and the thief whose hat was forcefully removed.

On that head…

「….. The beast tribe.」

Ears that resembles a dog.
As if looking at something unpleasant, I look down at that thief with complicated feelings

During that night, I returned to the room after having dinner and gazed out of the window gloomily.
In the end, I did not go to the guild.
After that, we hand over the two thieves to the knights who were delayed and the round up has finished for now.

Although I was also on the verge of getting interrogated…

「——Inviting you to be a collaborator is rude of me. Alice, thank you for your assistance.」

——Because of that girl saying so, I became a “no touch” to the knights

What kind of person is she….?

「Alice-san…? Are you feeling down?」

「…. Saira」

Saira saw that I was looking worried, sitting motionlessly at the window.

… On that head are her cute neko ears.

「Say, Saira? Will you come close to me?」

「? Okay.」

The girl who was curiously walking up to me….

「——Captured.」

With a surprise attack, I hugged her.

「Waaa!」

「Fufu, Saira sure is cute.」

Different from Ilya, times when she has an opening are cute.
She seems cuter than her actual age.

「A…Alice-san…. It's embarrassing nya…」

I captured the embarrassed Saira and gently caress her head.
Saira is also feeling good for as it is, she was leaning on me.
Finally she rested her head on my knees as I sat on the chair. It was as if I was embracing a real cat.

Race does not matter, It is dependent on the person.
I recall the strife in the afternoon.
Eventually, what kind of disturbance was that, the reasons behind it are not understood..
There are probably no words spoken between the different species.
However from the viewpoint of the truth, there is.

…. that's my reason for straining myself to chase after *them*.

Saira is a gentle kid.
And Saira is blessed greatly from the people around her.
However, what if she were to receive ill-will constantly like them?
Anyone would want to return the pain they receive.

That's normal
That's human.
For we are not gods.

Ermm… Alice-san. Today, I want to sleep in the same bed as you.
Timidly, Saira inquired
In that upward glance, a nervous expression can be seen.

「——Saira, so pampered. Okay, I am good. 」

「Really!? Alice-san, I love you nya!」

I smile wryly at Saira who is clinging onto me.
This kid looks too much at people's countenance.
I somewhat understood that.
Even if it's a little, I want to let her have peace of mind

…. And, tomorrow I was invited to have a meal with Francesca.

I was given a map and address.
As there was that incident, bringing Saira along is somewhat uncomfortable. But If I were to bring my party members along, I was told to bring all of them..

I have also conveyed the number of people.
Though we have circumstances, as the party was invited, I do not want to leave anyone behind.
In addition, if I cannot bring Saira along, from now on she will be spending a lot of time confined at home.

….. It will be alright.

Saira has no relations with them.

「Saa, Saira, shall we sleep now?」

「Yes, Alice-san!」

「Fufu, I am too excited so I have no more mood to sleep now.」

「I am too happy…. Embarrassing nya.」

TL: *Ilya in the other room*

As I stick close to Saira who was being embraced and we move to the bed.
I entered the bed first and roll up the quilt. After which, Saira entered the bed like a small animal.

I didn't experience anything like*dokidoki*

「Good Night, Saira.」

「Sweet dreams, Alice-san」

……..

…….um?

Suddenly, it dawned on me the smooth words that came out of my mouth.

—— Captured?

——So pampered?

「……」

Hey, am i okay?
The words coming out naturally from me, is not bad…..
As that was a little ecchi, it resulted in an uneasy night for me.

Fairy Notes(TL Notes):
I am not sure if anyone reads this, but yeah let's give this a try. Alice Tale is unique from the other series in the sense that there are many different kinds of dialogues within the chapter itself.

Alice, for instance is always using the standard Japanese. On the other hand, I am pretty sure everyone knows but Til uses archaic form of the language which is pretty similar to Gabera in MoM. So we do have a little difficulties in understanding their speeches and writing it out appropriately.

As for Francesca, the new rapier girl. She is the Ojou-sama type who is forever using desuwa~ .. masuwa~. Recent references are Usagi-chan from Anti Magic 35th Platoon. Though there aren't any meaning in it, I chose to leave masuwa~ within my translation.

As for Ilya, she uses the humble form which are usually used when talking to your superiors (Your manager / Teachers). It's pretty straightforward till the point where both Ilya and Alice are in the public. She became way more polite than usual and this is somewhat hard to bring the true meaning out in English. I had tried my best and hope you guys enjoy this chapter.

Speculations

Morning, after breakfast at the dining room in the lodge, we gathered in one of the rooms.
I was invited to a meal by Francesca in the afternoon so I was quickly instructed not to depart for the unfamiliar streets.

The me now, is now combing Til's hair.

「……And.. Til isn't coming？」

「No, I'm not. From your words, that person is some sort of a noble? Lining their own pockets, forgetting about their responsibilities, making their citizen impoverished is their raison d'etre(reason of existence). Aren't humans just rotten creatures. I am disgusted with them.」

「But Francesa herself has a noble atmosphere around her has nothing of that sort.」

After finishing combing her hair I started tying her hair into her trademark pigtails.
By the way, am I her disciple?
or her maid?

「Nay, tis not I, from what thou sayeth, thy person thou describes is of noble bith? Lining thy pockets with riches not of thee, doing not they duty, for they raison d'etre to gift despair to those of common bith. Tis not a man, nay bt a foul creature to be disgusted with!」

「However, today we are not particularly going to talk about politics.」

It seems like an informal social meeting to show gratitude for the other day.
As it is grandiose, I thought of refusing but refusing the invitation from that kind of person is also rude.

「Tis a girl with high-spirit, putting thought upon the reason of thy invite. Such a maiden witnessed thy power and chose to use it as if her own, yes?」

「Yeah…. After listening to Til's words, I will probably develop a distrust of humans」

「Kufu, for sure」

I do have my own self awareness….

「Well good Dragon lass, do thou understand?」

「Yes, Oshishou-sama. I will protect Alice-sama.」

You are that worried about me??
Speaking of which, Ilya, in order to find out about the ongoing rumors circulating in the royal capital, went to inquire along the streets and buy information from the information broker yesterday. As expected, it seems that the current situation is pretty tense.

Just like what the merchant Oji-san had said.
The friction with the republic has *bore fruit*, or discrimination, which is the reason for the tense situation.
As the republic is a country which insists on freedom and equality, it seems like one is able to choose the reasons as they like for their official stance.
(ED: they pick a cause and fit the reasons behind it. Think United States politics)

As I thought, the point is the beast tribes huh..
Due to that, the extent of comparing the freedom in Western Republic to the discrimination faced in the royal capital made the beast tribes feel ashamed.
Putting the cart before the horse is also a good thing i guess but that's not a reason.
(Ed: the cause of the friction is the discrimination, because of the friction there is discrimination. A "self fulfilling prophecy" so to speak.)

As Saira warily disguised herself with a hat yesterday, it seems like she did not receive any harassment.

「However, wearing the hat… everywhere… is somehow or another suspicious.」

I glanced at Saira who is still wearing her hat now.
「About that, Ojou-sama. From the money I was entrusted to, I had used it to purchase Saira's hairband. I think it's somewhat necessary. 」

After speaking, Ilya took out the wrapped item from the desk and passed it over to me.
As the same time, she passed me the remaining change from yesterday.
After breaking the gold coin, it became a huge amount of silvers and copper.
To what extent did she go to persuade someone to write a handwritten memo.

「I think you are too forward but….」

「Ilya… Magnificent!」

As expected, I want to hug her, carefully and gently.
But due to the public gazes, I will not do it.

「Saira, try using it?」

「Y..Yes.. Is it okay?」

I peek at Ilya's expression and timidly move closer to Saira.

「Ara? I think it's perfect for Saira ? i wish that you will try wearing it. I chose it for you.」

Ilya smiled kindly at her.
She is really … kind?
Well, even if it is not said, we know that she is kind.
But she is definitely mischievous.

「Saira , will you stay put? I will tie it for you.」

「Ye…Yes.. 」

Sparkling as she comes over, I unwrap and took out the hairband to tie her hair up.

The tinge is a warm light brown so the embroidery is cute.
It's a cloth type headband.
If it's attached, will be it become a turban?
(Ed: meaning the ends are left to dangle down the neck/back rather than tying them up into the headband)

As it is wide, it substituted as a hat to cover Saira's ears.。
The appearance of her ponytail unexpectedly suits her.
I can feel the girl power of Ilya!

「Ho.. How is it?」

「It suits you! You are cute!」

「Ehh, it fits you really well.」

The headband substitute for the hat really fits her well.
Different from the unfashionable hat used to cover her ears, it looks truly fashionable and it will not stick out like a sore thumb from the crowd.
However, strictly speaking, wearing nothing and entering in naturally is the best option.
In any case, with this, our preparation is done.

「Well, shall we go? What about Til?」

「She is sleeping」

「Throughout the day!?」

Talking about it is useless.
This is called living in luxury!
And I had just tied her hair up nicely!

「…Well , it's okay. So we are only left with the formalities of tonight」

「Umu」

With three in a company, we face out back towards Til who is yawning loudly.

「——Alice, do not be used.」

「Eh?」

When I turned around, Til has completed slipped into the bed,
If I were to say as I thought it to be, it would be so, but…

Using the map received from Francesca, the place we finally arrived at is a magnificent mansion.
Or rather, the place we are now, we can see everything else except the gate.
When we pass the invitation letter from Francesca to the doorkeeper, it was immediately conveyed *to her*
TL: there is no subject. it just says immediately conveyed.

After being guided around the huge garden, we reach a chalk-colored building.
The garden is being well maintained and there are multi-coloured flowers blooming in the flowerbed.
How to say, I have been invited to such an inappropriate place.
Ilya's usual calm atmosphere remain as it is.
Saira followed close to me nervously.
Umu, this is where I can do nothing else but imitate Ilya.
For example, my heart is jumping like a rabbit for now.

「——Please wait for a while. Likewise for Alice's companions」
*Do note that these are servants talking. They talk in a very polite tone.

In the guest room is where Francesca is.

But naturally, she is not wearing a sword now.
Due to her figure in a sparkling dress, she immediately transforms into a noble from yesterday's *battle shoujo*.

「Fracesca. Thank you for inviting me today. Ahh, noo, Francesca -sama」

As I was being glared at by a supposedly expired butler, I corrected myself.
Butler-ish

Excessively beautiful but for that reason, the grim face is terrifying Ikemen ?
Is the butler a Ikemen?

「Alice, I had told you yesterday no? It's okay to address me without any honorifics.」

「Ye…yes」

Even if you are okay with it, it seems like there are many characters who do not think it's nice, no?

「Alice」

「Fr…Francesca…. sama」

The honorific, the honorific!
Francesca and the honorific!
That butler please.. by any means!!
With a glance that can kill people, looking at me!

「Muu! How old are you, Alice?」

Francesca who is puffing her cheeks inquired.

「15 years old.」

「Maa! I am also 15 years old desuwa~」

With a sparkling expression and rushing into approaching me, the girl was gently restrained by the butler.

「Hime-sama, the preparation for meals/lunch has been completed. Please proceed to the table.」

「Muu… if it's that sort of pal.」

With the exception of the person herself, I was not welcomed.
….. I am getting tired.
It is a soiree which requires table manners
But, as for me who was well-informed with miscellaneous knowledge, I did not say that this set-up is easy!
Regarding information, my heart was pounding hard as I partake in the meal.
Frankly, things such as taste is secondary.

「How is it, Alice? Is it tasty?」

「Ye…Yes. It is really tasty.」

Each time being asked for my thoughts and so on , I broke out in cold sweat.
I am getting tired.
I am not able to resist my respect for Illya's prim and proper face.
Her manners are also perfect.
The problem is Saira.
For some reason I have a feeling that I am unsure if it's good. When I look at her, she looks like she can't bear to be here.

「Saira, is that your name? Do not mind, please eat the food as you like. The long awaited lunch, if each and everyone of you enjoy it, it will be good. 」

Francesca followed up so it's was really helpful.

Yeah, personally, as expected, this girl has a likeable personality, i guess.
But the butler standing behind gave a twitch.
Well, it's preferred rather than being told about his unnecessary disagreement.
That butler view me as something like Ilya, i guess?

「Well now, There are also other reasons to call out for Alice. I have a small request for you.」
Once everyone has finished …the meal, we are having after lunch tea? A little early?
For the time being, while the red tea was being served, Francesca began to talk.

「Judging from what I saw/witnessed. Alice skills are outstanding」

From that words, I saw Ilya's eyes narrowing beside me which made me understood.
I knew that, at those words, Ilya, who was sitting besides me, narrowed her eyes and looked at me

「But I do not have any recollections of doing anything …..」

「Humble desuwa. Who else is able to use magic in that manner ? As far as I know, only a handful bunch is able to use magic at will. "Ice and snow" or "Magic flame" to that extent, just to say desuwa~」

Ooo, at such a place, my master name is……

When the person who I like was being praised, why did I become happy?
However, I were to give a single comment, I believe I do not have the level to match with them.

However, i do not know who "Magic flame" is ….
Yes.
The application of magic is not normal?
If that's the case, I was too careless.
For Til did not even say anything.
….No, Ilya did not say anything as well. This is due to me lacking in general knowledge. Well, I didn't believe that I do not understand that sort of thing.
That kind of pattern huh?

「……」

I secretly look at Ilya.
Her face is full of smiles.
——Ojou-sama, didn't I say it before?
Such an eye-contact.

「……We…well. As I do not have that amount of ability that you have proclaimed exaggeratedly, that little flattery is making me embarrassed. 」

It can't be helped if my secret is out.
The way of *hiding my claws* is uninteresting
I want to live carefreely in this world.

「Alice has a likeable personality desuwa~. Ever since the time I saw you, I felt that it was fate.」

「What a ter..terrific simple fate…*Hiih*.」

I should stop saying unnecessary things for I am being stared to death.
That butler has a ferocious impression.
Francesca smiled bitterly and in order to control her subordinates, she raised her hands.
The butler's expression dulled.
…… What the, she knew?
Francesca is also unexpectedly shrewd.

「Speaking of the favour, Alice. I want you to take part in the battle tournament. As my representative」

「Battle Tournament?」

I don't think I will answer that here.

「Aye, to tell the truth, I'd rather participate myself, but I have almost no freedom of choice on my life」

As if she is tired, Francesca shrugs her shoulders
I can see the displeasure from the butler who is restraining himself at the back.

「……So it's come down to a representative. Rather than me, whom you know from just yesterday and today, shouldn't there be other capable people closer to you?」

「Strictly speaking, I am not able to conclude who is able to receive my confidence or not. If I take time, I might be able to do so, but it's one week to the battle tournament.」

Hmm?
Such strange words.
The battle tournament is not something that takes place unexpectedly today or yesterday.

Moreover, she was unable to prepare accordingly for the event…..
In short, recently, a sudden change in event?

……. Suspicious.
「The butler behind me who is too rude is worthy of my trust but he will not leave from my side.」

Francesca added in a bitter manner in some way..
But the butler did not change his expressions even once.

「In the battle tournament, either way I do have some interest but…..」

I cannot make a judgment now.

「Alice, I understand your anxiety. This is also me with a one-sided request. If our positions were reversed, I will not be able to agree obediently as well.」

The troubling thing is this.
Francesca who totally knew all the weird conditions to it upon making the request.
I dare say, immediately after my rejection, she have another plan no?

Because of that those unrelated people have hardships. In addition, they will have a guilty conscience.
…… Crafty.

「——Excuse the impertinence of an unrelated party」
*Ilya is saying very very very politely.

When I was lost, Illya who was keeping silent until now opened her mouth.
In addition, Francesca did not even get angry and was waiting with a small smile.

「You are called Ilya?」

「Yes, I am Alice Ojou-sama's aide. Please pardon my intrusion into the discussion.」

「I do not mind desuwa～」

Francesca seems to nod in a happy manner.
It seems like from the start, she has also placed her sights on Ilya.

「First of all, Alice Ojou-sama originally has planned to take part in the battle tournament. Will there be some merit to be Francesca-sama 's representative?」
「Such fitting words. If Alice were to be my representative, I will prepare one platinum coin. That is not limited to winning the tournament. It is just solely her agreement desuwa～」

Platinum coin!?
What the!

「I see, It is increasingly becoming more suspicious.」

Ilya's terrifying pleasant smile was directed at Francesca.
….. Oi Oi
The butler is also become terrifying too?

「I am preparing the reward that matches the risk desuwa～」
「Then, second point. Can you enlighten us about the specific risk pertaining to it please?」
「That is a secret desuwa～ . I want you to understand that that ambiguity has been included in the reward」
additional rewards for the ambiguity

「FuFu, I see.」

Don't give a completely understood look, Ilya!?
Moderately, Moderately!?

「Third Point, in the first place, may I inquire about this request's rough objective ?」

With this question, Francesca gave a single clap.
With the cold look which Ilya is giving during the exchange, the expression

of the girl who is answering in a happy manner turn somewhat serious.
「In order to grill the Republic 『Dog』 desuwa~」

Saira *bikuri * shivered.
And then she directed a cold gaze at Francesca.
This person…..!

「……I see, I have considerably understood your 『Objective』. It seems like you know that Ojou-sama is 『Someone's』 disciple 」
「That person has no intentions to hide herself, no? 」
Francesca calmly replied.
Ahh~ , certainly
Certainly….
As long as her ears are not hidden.
Well, that sort of thing is in the same direction as my objective, carefreely living.
There are also immigration checks when we enter

I understand that my looks and appearance stands out from the rest.
In addition, yesterday's incident.
If it doesn't not leak out, it will be strange.

「Alice,I have a strong interest in you. That successor to Einshaura has appeared. What sort of event has happened?」
TL: this is very vague. It literally meant. That sort of something has happened.
「？」
Til's family name?
…… No?
Is there some special meaning to it?
「….. Even if I was baited, Til will not stir. As she is as always sloppy.」
「Fu, Fufufufufu! That ice and snow.. that sort of…..」
It seems that for some reasons I had struck a point.

Does Francesca know Til?
「Sorry for my rudeness desuwa~. Fufu, however Alice, after talking until this point, I may not be able to gain your trust. But it is true that I find Alice herself very likeable desuwa~ 」

「But you have just met me ……」

「Things like meeting amiable people are really non-existent. I do not have that sort of time no? To entrust trouble to someone in advance is hard but, I want to be friends with you. Isn't that shameless of me?」
「Friends……」

あれ？
Are?
(ED: read Ar-eh || implied meaning like Ehh?)

I, in this world have …. friends?
Onee-chan is Nee-chan.
Ilya is …… somewhat different.
Saira is like my imouto….
Oya….?

「That sort of Alice is very desirable desuwa～」

「Friends…….」

For some reason, Francesca laughed strangely.
Ilya gave an astonished expression.
「Well… I understood. For friendship, just this once, I will listen to your selfishness.」
The butler returned my answer with an intense stare while Francesca on the contrary is sparkling.
Ilya gave a small sigh.

「Alice! I am really honoured desuwa～」

Leaning forward his body, even now from the opposite side of the table. As expected, I am being warned not to do something by the butler.
「Just this one time.」
Oh dear oh dear….
You will never know what might happen
Although I do not quite understand but, the remuneration is definitely enticing.

The Battle Tournament, I will do it!

The beginning of Hope

「Is it okay, Alice-sama? It was not necessary to undertake her request.」

「Well.. as I understand. So, please do not show such a grim face, Ilya.」

On the way back, it takes a while to get back to the lodge so Ilya draws close to me.
Calm down Calm down.
Francesca's desire is to have her own representative getting well-known in the limelight.
In short, it is that sort of thing.
If that happens, it will be a power struggle in the battle tournament.
Perhaps, the influential person who Francesca is battling against is also planning to send in their representatives.

「This country is probably rougher than I thought. Do you have yesterday's report, Ilya?」

「…. Certainly, I am hearing information that several influential people are aiming at the next regent seat」

「I am certain that the king has passed away several years back and now the young prince is in his place or so?」

「Yes, Prince Dioru. The regent is Romasu-tono. As he is a senior, the trust from the late king is deep and in addition he is a devoted retainer.」

「Francesca is that Romasu-dono granddaughter,I am not wrong right?」

「Francesca Wilmington. There is no mistake that she is Romasu Willmington's granddaughter」

I do not think that you alone have a capable right-hand man, Francesca.
Well, by no means, it's only me till now who has not thought of using my

free time to collect information.
Ilya's too cool
The memo's news material, saying what was happening concisely.

Thanks to that, I felt at ease for not being a clown dancing in Francesca's palms.
…. Well, but i cannot guarantee that our movements over here will be grasped by them.

「She is one of the big three families right?」

「Yes, Austria Family, Sacramento Family, Wilmington family. Presently, the situation is that they are fighting for power in the kingdom. 」

The decayed royal family huh…
Til has sharply talked about it but I sort of trust her a little more

「The guy behind Francesca?」

「I am really sorry. I do not know him.」

「It can't be helped. It's only 1 day after all.」

That's far as Ilya is concerned, I am sure.
Although she is like a ruffian, now she is good.

「Francesca's house is the moderate faction against the war with the republic. That is the truth, am i right? 」

「Even if it's a little, that seems to be Romusu-tono's will.」

「That Romusu-tono is bowing down due to illness. but this is the current situation given」

Ilya nodded her head.

「Autria family are belligerent die-hards. As for Sacremento family's current situation, I do not know much.」

「However, both head of the families are healthy」

「Yes. And the Wilmington Family. Francesca-sama's parents died several years back due to an 『accident』」

「Francesca's motive…. revenge?」

「There is a possibility.」

This is an extreme display of power.* and strongly disapprove it *
Even if you think about that, it is no wonder. But….
Compared to that, I am worried about the last few words that Francesca talked about just now.

「……The republic dog. Ah! I am sorry, Saira,. I do not have any detestable meaning in my words!.」

「No! I understand, therefore I trust …… Alice-san nya.」

「Thank you, Saira.」

Saira who is walking opposite of Ilya, shook her head forcefully.
TL: I am not sure how to say about this. it is something like this
*Ilya*Alice*Saira*
In order not to betray this trust, If there is something I can do then I must do it?
I do not want to see the beast tribe bearing the full brunt of the war etc.
No, in reality it does not stop with just that.

「If the republic spy enters….. the Austria family?」

「If there are premises of the republic starting a war.」

「Premises huh….」

If the republic were to start a war, do they think that they will win?
There is such an overwhelming difference in power?
I had just came into this world, therefore, I do not quite understand relationships between the countries.

「I am still lacking of tons of knowledge.」
Literal TL : he is full of holes Ie lacking of things he doesn't know.

Trying to poke around the bush takes efforts too. 「Ojou-sama. Are you really taking part in the battle tournament?」
「The surface power struggle, I will take part. Francesca's battle will be the other side no?」 TL: The author uses 表 and 裏 which can be depicted as both sides of the coin, namely heads and tails. It can also be describe as front or back. Therefore, in this case, Alice is trying to say she will be the one out in the open while Francesca will be in the shadows.

「I understand what you had said. However, in the first place is that lady a trustworthy person?」

「Fufu」

「？」

Ilya tiled her head at my laughter.

「I am sorry, well? Probably Francesca had also said the same thing.」

That butler indeed seems to have said that.

「Wilmington Family is one of the big three. That young lady is Francesca. I do want to avoid the war. Using this chance is effortless no? 」

「If Ojou-sama were to say so. 」

By chance huh. But just because it's a coincidence, I can't just not worry. The uproar caused by Francesca is a little hard to fanthom. When you think about …..The flip side of the flip side and so on, to some extent you will become someone like Til who do not trust humans.

「As for now, I am Wilmington's representative. I will exemplify the power * on the light side*. Trickeries on the dark side will be taken care of by Francesca.」

「But, Ojou-sama should also reconsider skirting around danger.」
TL: the author uses consider in a very polite manner.

「You will protect me, Ilya?」

「It's probably worth doing, I guess.」

Ilya smiled bitterly.
At most, I will make use of the 『Free』 status I have in my palm,
TL: Alice is not a slave, a free person. she is talking about using her free status to become a slave when facing defeat.

So It's mutually beneficial
Well, that platinum coin sure is very fascinating/ enticing.

「And, in this current topic who are the people you are worried about?」

「There are two people.」

「Fu~n 」

Francesca?

Or….

「Ojou-sama too」

「Ojou-sama too. is unexpectedly a terrifying person. I thought so today.」

Fufufu~!

Tremble more in fear and you might as well respect me! Ilya!

「Ah, no . As expected it is probably your imagination.」

「….. desuyone.」
TL : ……I see(In a dejected manner)

By the way, as I am participating in the battle tournament, I want to win.
I do not plan to say something like…either victory or defeat is fine by me.
I will mow down lined-up enemies.

Besides, preparations for the event is important.
For those people who neglect preparations, the victory goddess will not smile at them.

And then the number one thing I lack as of now, is–
Weapons!!
Let's go back to the lodge quickly and *try to* start the strategy meeting
To check my condition, i slammed my hands on the desk.
It hurts badly!

「Ow, Ow..」

Only Saira moderately approve.
As for the remaining two.

「Oshishou-sama, my apologies. I am attaching.*probably her pigtails*..」

「It bothers me not, thy girl has doeth as I hath expected. It shall at least not bore thee.」

「Ehhh. About that.」

「Over there! I can hear you from here!」

Please do not boldly gossip bad things about me behind my back!?
Til who is lying on the bed, for some reason is lying on Ilya.
….. This person is really sleeping the whole day?

「…..Anyway, Do not look back at today's important incident. Even if you look back at it, you will not receive anything. 」

「Is that right?」

「……」

Ilya is cold.

「*cough* Sorry for the interruption. Ojou-sama, please do not give such a depressed face. I am Ojou-sama's shield The words that I swore to you is never a lie.」

「Will you come with me?」

「Of course.」

「Even if it's to do stupid things?」

「You will look cute desuwa～」

「….. If I were to say you are dark?」

「I am dark. My lady.」

Naturally, her hands move towards a chest, as though she was taking an oath while proclaiming this to me.
Even if I make enemies in the world, I feel that I can still live on.

「Ehh…. We are sticking out? O-Shishou-sama….」

「Leave it. Thou will get use to it.」

「I.. I see.?」

Thanks to Saira's bewildered voice and Til's yawn, we returned back to reality.
No No, but I do not plan to lose track and followed with the flow.

「(SFX: cough), At any rate, I am making the job of finding weapons my first priority. According the info I am having now, the weapons in the battle tournament are one's responsibilities no?」

「Yes, quite so.」

I must visit every weapons store tomorrow to get my weapon, but….
I look at Saira
*Pikon*Her ears jumped.
Already used to Ilya and Til or not, Saira is wearing neither the hat nor the hair band in the room.

「Saira, if there are no facilities for the blacksmithing, is it impossible to do anything?」

「No! It's not. More than that, the raw materials are an important factor.」

「For instance, if only you have the raw material in this room, is it possible? 」

「It's possible nya!」

As it is one's field of expertise, Saira's eyes are sparkling.

「Eee, So the types of facilities we saw at rufin street, what are those?」

「Those are stoves meant for mass production. He also does kitchen knife, machete and so on. 」

「I see….. Those lining up in the weapons store with no inscriptions, perhaps they are?」

「Yes! We use that furnance to do mass production! Of course, if there are no raw materials, it is impossible. Therefore, there are limitations.」

I see i see.

「Certainly, if I were to have a furnace, I am able to contribute to Alice and co's revenue, but…. 」

「Ng~. Well.. about that. Let's think about that first. As for current situation,I want Saira to build our weapons and armour and so on.」

「Ye… Yes! Please give me an assignment! 」

She seems really elated.
I become attracted to her smiling face.

「Alice-san, what are you using now? As expected, is it a rod?」

「As i do not have strength, heavy items are impossible for me….」

However, it's like that.
I have to think about it.

Preliminary Preparations

I entrust the matter of gathering raw materials to Ilya and Saira and I have things I want to investigate.
As I do not have time, I must walk in an efficient manner(I must go quickly).
* I must not dilly dally.

Thinking about that, in the neighborhood just slightly out from the main street, I turned up at the slave firm.
In regards to buying and selling of slaves, it is considered, for the time being, a respectable business.
Therefore, it is not built alongside the brothels in the side streets.

At the nearby reception after entering, I tried to inquire whether or not Betrand-san is around.
Just as I thought, he is in his room.

Therefore, I requested to have my name conveyed over to him. I was led into a room bigger than the one in Rinnal a while back——

「Well well. Ojou-sama. It's been a long time.」

「Betrand-sama. It has not been a long time.」

「Fu, that's true」

After returning an appropriate reply, I sat on the opposite couch.
As usual, Bertrand-san with his eyepatch is full of vigour, I reflexively look around at the surroundings.

「Salt-san's job has finished. As he was requested as an escort to this street, if you search for him, I believe you will be able to meet him.」

Fu~n Is Kuro Zukume also here? Kidal translated him as black but well, the literal translation is Kuro Zukume which is completely black.

「And, may I know your official business? Is that useful to you?」

Giving me with a scheming look with his eyepatch on, I pulled myself together.

「If it's Ilya, she cannot be more useful than what she is now. I am not here for such dull businesses like customers complaining and so on. 」

「Is that so. I am sorry for my rudeness. Ojou-sama」 「No, The things I want to ask are the inside stories of this royal capital. Bertrand-sama, don't you seem to know a lot about this neighbourhood? 」

「Business related stuffs, I plan to grasp an understanding in it.」

The way of a snake is to talk to a snake. I am not particularly looking down on him.

「Recently, your beast battle slaves are not selling that well, aren't they?」

「Fumu….」

He bowed his head in assent and his eyes are covered with the eyepatch. Same as usual, this Ossan who is difficult to read.

「That direction, if possible, I look forward to hearing from you.」

「Since before, it is said that trust is an important point when doing business.」

「I remembered. 」

「Something like confidentiality, I believe you can treat it as an imagination?」

Can you treat it as an imagination?
I believe that you can imagine what's called obligation of keeping secrecy?
Although the things I am doing now is vicious, this is a sense of duty.

Without that, his business will not succeed huh. The extent of my admiration is two-sided.
Professional huh. If I try to peek whether this person is stocking up or training, i will be experience something like a nightmare.

「Then, let's talk about business.」

With great interest, his eyebrows was raised above his eye patch.

「For now, I wished for some beast battle slaves. Sex and age etc does not matter. It must be a battle-capable beast slave. Do you have them on hand right now?」

「Fufufufu~. Ojou-sama is truly a terrible person.——The answer is no.」

As I thought. Well, you don't say. Elves and dragon tribes are rare. Not to mention, this is the royal capital slave firm. It's not something like the countryside in Rinnal. As far as it's concerned, I am not able to do some preparations…..

「Well, as the sales contract has been taken care of. Moreover, is there anyone who is fulfilling the shipping of slaves around?」

「…..If I were to say there are?」

「Negotiations with the direct purchaser, discussions of the possiblility of transfering over of *ownerships*」 The wrinkles on his face deepens and smiled quietly. 「May I know the purchaser's name?」

「Ojou-sama, You are truely an interesting lady.」 「Your answer?」

「No. An act that goes against my virtue is without saying not beneficial. 」

「As expected Bertrand-sama.」

That eye patch is so good. My personal valuation of his character is soaring through the roof, on the contrary.

「Although you had spared your precious time to me,,it appears that I had inevitably spoken selfishly.」

Fu, to respond to a ladies selfishness is part of a gentleman's ability/job.

「Ara? May I think Bertrand-sama as a gentleman?」

「Now then…. speaking of which, just a few days ago, it seems that there is a person with good appearance who visit my business. Of course, with this sort of business, it is natural that those who come here are rich. However, this person by chance seems to a special class of customer. Ah, My heart is burning.」

He twisted his head as if feigning ignorance.

「Fufu, I say your loose tongue will destroy you? Mister Bertrand.」

「In that situation, it's cause of Ojou-sama's beauty.」

「Really, you twist your tongue really well.」

I see however. After that, we chatted for a short while and I left the firm. Is the gathering of raw material going well? As Ilya is around, I believe they won't do something reckless. But if there aren't any in the street, they must go out to the nearby harvesting areas to harvest personally.

Well, Ilya is different from me, therefore Saira will probably not be exposed to danger When I was in deep thoughts, I bumped into someone.

Or perhaps I should say, that person suddenly jumped out from the side alley so as one would expect, I couldn't avoid it.

The other party fell grandly and seems to have grazed her knees and began *wan wan*crying. A girl whose age is so young that I might be able to count her age with 1 hand. Pitch black short hair.

Her wet eyes are also black. This trait…. No no, more than that.

「Wawa, I am sorry!? I was looking away!」

「Onii-chan～～～ It hurts～～～ Eguuu!」

The surrounding people were gathering at a distance looking at her bawling The place I am presently at is different from the main street. As it is a little run-down, there is few pedestrians traffic. Anyhow, I must treat her grazed knee. 「Pain pain go away～」

「Aaaaaaah… A..re?」

When I crouched down to apply heal on her, the grazed knee healed at once. With the wound healed in the blink of an eye, , the girl now have a incredulous face.

「Onee-chan…. Magician- san?」

Although there is no mistaking it, the nuance like word magician that the kid uses is like a fantasy where someone came out from a fairy-tale.

「Yes.. Onee-chan is a BIG magician. I am a disciple of a magician.」

Why am I saying such nice truth here to the girl

「Deshi? Onee-chan, Deshi, what's that?」
TL: Deshi is the romanji for disciple. That girl don't understand.

「It means nibbling here completely. … yeah. That's Deshi.」

「Fueee, Cool～」

Such a pure girl. Ahh, disciple is not particularly cool? It seems like I have provided her with wrong information.

「——Oi, what are you doing.」

「Ahh, Onii-chan!」 When a guy's voice rang out from the same road, the girl frantically stood up and jump towards him. I too stood up and confirm the owner of the voice.

「…. Ahh~ Ehhh. Even if you do not glare at me like that, ____」

「That's normal.」

「I see.」

As usual, the expressions on his eyes are bad. ——Kuro Zukume。

「It seems like this brat has troubled you.」

「Kyahaha」

Gushi Gushi as Kuro Zukume caress the girl's head gently and the girl happily smiled. It was an unexpected scenery.

「As for the collision, I am also in the wrong. So I am sorry?」

「No! Deshi is cool! Onii-chan!」

Deshi, it is established.

「By the way, Salt-san, what are you doing here? Kidnapping?」

「…. What the hell are you talking about?」

Are, was I mistaken? As I couldn't understand the relationship of this girl and Kuro Zukume at all, it's beyond doubt.

「Ehh.. That so called high-level play?」

「You…. what the hell are you talking about.」

Onii-chan is not a play?

「You don't understand me….」

「It's your remarks.」

When we are continuing our unproductive chatter, the girl rammed into me.

「Wa!! Quite a tomboy she is!」

Now, she is hugging my legs.

「Deshi ～, Onii-chan's lover?」

「Ehh? This person has an interest in humans?」

「Do you want to die, bitch.」

「Kyahaha, Onii-chan is angry～」

The girl hides behind me, using me like a shield Calm down.

「……Such a cute kid. Your imouto?」

「……Something like that.」

With a little sad look in his eyes, Kuro Zukume replied curtly.

「If this kid is with you, it's better not to chase after Libra.」

「It is not related to you.」

「Do you think you and Til will win against her in a battle?」

「……」

「Perhaps, that level….」

If it's possible, I do not want to see it. For the reason, I ran all the way to the royal capital. However, in the Royal Capital, yet another trouble pop out. This is really… After Kuro Zukume sank into silence, I saw Francesca's butler coming out from the side street.

Yet to notice me here? If that's the case, I want to get through without him noticing! I pulled Kuro Zukume's hand and stuck close to the wall.

With my back pressed against the wall, Kuro Zukume who is in front of me pressed both his arms onto the wall in a bid to hide me. *Kabe don* With this, no matter what the butler does, I will be in his blind spot. I was under Kuro Zukume's arms, so it gently became like this.

「That person, what is he….」

Francesca is not present. Moving separately huh. The butler who came out from the side street nochantanly look around the area. Although he look over here for an instant, he glanced with uninterestedly and walk towards the main street. Nothing is exposed. I guess.

When I was observing the situation for a short while, a guy who wore a hat, thrust something into his pocket and rush out from the same street as if bursting out into the sunlight. That guy looks over here one more time and thanks to the inpregnable black wall, it seems like my existance was not leaked out.

For some reason when my sights were cut off, I was glared at by a so-called face who was about to erupt. Iya, somehow when I saw that kind of look, something comes to mind. When I couldn't see that guy anymore, I finally gave a sigh.

I was worried/nervous. I looked up to the place where the voice was coming from. A closeup face with a terrible expression. Not to mention since before, the looks on his eyes are bad.

「What is this about?」

This? I look at our current situation. With the back pressed against the wall, Kuro Zukume in a *kabe don* posture.

「….. What about it?」

Normally, a girl would *kya kya * and make a huge ruckus. Somehow or another, he seems happy. It seems like he does not good gentlemen

education? TL: help plz. (Rumanshi: It seems as though he isn't educated as a gentleman well.)

「Are you tempting me?」

「Ehh? Salt-san, you have interest in females other than small girls? 」

「……」

「……Offended」

Before he completed burst out in anger, I quickly slip out from his arms. Unable to nurture friendships between the opposite sex? Although it's completely okay for me, the other party….

「You are offended….」

Now Kuro Zukume who began slashing at me. However thanks to him chasing after a female, he did not spring onto me. If you come, come! Policeman, this person! I just got to say this. But, well.. the worrisome job has been investigated, yet another troublesome thing has popped out.

It has already been 3 days so it's crucial. After hypothesizing about the possible scenarios, I will do my best to challenge them. 「Onii-chan's. Offended~」 Ahh, it has been established. Sorry….

The Battle tournament

Concerning entry itself, Francesca seems to have already settled it. After we were done at the Colosseum's reception, I was quickly sent to the waiting room.
The waiting room is wider than I thought and it is perfectly suitable for the blood-thirsty opponents.
In the battle tournament, first the preliminaries are held, and then it moves into the final event.
Only 16 people will remain at the finals.
There will be selections from A block to H block and only 2 of them will win and advance in their respective block.
There are 10 people separated into each block respectively and those who can rise up to the final selection are truly the strong people.
Negligence is forbidden.
I was assigned by the reception to Block A with a Representative badge being attached onto my chest.
So, with this, I become something to grant Francesca's wishes but….
Not just the Battle Tournament, the danger around me and risk will jump by leaps and bound.
After the preliminary rounds has ended, I will collect my advance pay.
「My Apologies, Are you Wilmington family' s representative?」
I turned around towards the voice.
A refreshing young guy.
With red hair with grey eyes.
A guy who has the airs of a prince?
「Yes. You are?」
「I am Reynold Sacremento. Was entered into the C block 」
Their family member came out in person!?
…. Wa, if I were to compare him with Francesca, the requirements are simple huh.
Other than being a girl, I have no other connections with Francesca.
「……I am Alice. Francesca's friend」
「I see. Because of that girl's character, I thought she will come out personally, but… I am relieved.」
Oh?
「You too should give up before you get seriously injured. Such a pitiful girl like you being sent off to the battlefield, I am troubled.」

「I am greatly obliged by your concern. But I am not here to play. I am here to show my power, as the girl's friend.」
「I see… Then, I will not hold back.」
After saying that, the prince places his hands on his chest in a knight manner and stands at attention as a polite greeting and leave.
The specialized weapon hanging by his hips is a knight's sword huh..
Sacramento huh….
The preliminaries are in sequential order.
As I am in the A group, I am part of the first group to enter the stage.
In the preliminary contest,we're split into groups of five, and the winners of the battle royales in their respective groups will advance. The process is very simple, yet savage.
If I was inferior, things like fighting against four people at once would be terrifying.
Resigning myself, I enter the circular stage arena.
When the Colosseum's stand starts to become excited as the deadly event begins.
With an estimated diameter of 200 meters around structure, it can hold a capacity of over 30 thousand people.
As I survey the crowd, I see that there are banners flying around the Colosseum celebrating a full house.

My opponents are all stern males.
As for weapons, 2 of them carry Blades, 1 Lance, and the last one holds an Battle-Axe.
『The first preliminary round! Group A's match is about to begin! The rules are simple. If you fall off from the stage, you are disqualified! If you say you give up, the referee, me, will announce that you have been eliminated! If you die, also eliminated!』
From the stage who is magnificently announcing is a skimpily clad onee-san referee..
Using a magic stone as a megaphone near the mouth, her voice spreads all around the Colosseum.
『And for this preliminary contest a special rule ! Projectiles are forbidden! 』
OI!
….. Thunder-like magic can't be used?
I thought I would definitely be able to show a magician-like appearance here.
There were cheers from the audience.

By chance, they aren't imagining me being stripped after I lose, right?
Sleazebags.
『Don't look down on me, really.』
I clenched my hands and bumped my gloved fists together.
They're weapons freshly made from raw materials gathered by Ilya and Saira.
Caster Gloves (Smelting) (Inscription: Saira)
Forged exceeding the highest quality.
With these weapons, I'll show off my hand-to-hand combat.
I don't have any blind spots since I studied the Fairbairn System.
Fairbairn system (defendu)
…… … That's a lie, though.
『Okay. Please begin!』
Immediately after the referee Onee-san's announcement, 4 of them rushed towards me.
——As expected huh ！
「Spirit of Lightning come to my side, become my blade! Lightning Enchant!」
Naturally, my glove becomes lightning enchanted.
I gazed at my opponents.
In front are 2 swords, behind them is the lance and the last one lagging behind is the Battle-Axe
TL: he just called them by weapons. Lazy Alice.
Getting surrounded would be bad.
If possible, the ideal situation will be fighting them one vs one.
If that's the case, I will aim the first one!
I insert magic power into my legs and jumped.
I jumped over the sword and lance.
My target is the lagging Battleaxe.
Slow response!
I reached his back in one leap, inflicting a blow to his side as he frantically turned around.
Although it has no strength in it, I hit it in with a intelligence five thunder magic.
Body convulsing, the Battle-Axe fell in the situation.
The arena went completely silent.
It is different from what the spectators had expected huh.
It's perfect. Using 1 of my opponent as a warning to the rest.
「I had also betting my life on this. I do not specifically plan to kill you people but… Therefore, I am saying this. I am not going out of my way to avoid killing you either. So do you have the resolutions to face me ?」

Narrowing my eyes, I tried to say it a slightly threatening manner.
I can perceive that a few of my opponents flinch from it.
I do not plan to let my opponents showcase their powers.
For if I were to eat an attack of the opponent, it will be the end.
It's due to my close combat is like tightrope walking
In actuality, I have no room for any doubt.
「——tsu！」
During the moment they swallowed their saliva, I drew a circle and used my magic to move.
Aiming to disappear from their sights, I struck the sides of the troublesome long reach lance.
This time I struck with my palms and during the instant of the impact, I detonated the repellent force.
I gradually become accustomed to regulating my magic power.
With my foothold firmly stuck to ground due the magnetic field I created to stabilize my body, I blew the opponent away who is heavier than me.
The spear flew and landed outside of the arena.
「The hell did she do!?」
With this, 2 people remain.
I wish to seal my victory during the chaos.
I dived into the sword's chest and drive in my kick enchanted with Lightning.
——Kicks are actually my specialty.。
But it's not martial arts though.
Landing my kick, I blew the sword out of the arena and slip into the last sword's chest.
As expected his timing is bad and the opponent's downwards swing of the sword is too slow.
From below, as if I am pushing up, I strike the sword's jaws with my lightning palm and knock him out.
「Fuu」
I have to take a chance with close combat.
I am still far away from Til's strongest moment.
With great pains, I had recently started learning the basics of close combat.
The palm strikes I received during training hurt greatly…
I unintentionally rubbed my stomach.
『Th… THIS IS COMPLETE UPSET!! Victory goes to the Wilmington family's Alice!』
With the referee Onee-san's announcement, huge cheers broke out from the stands.

「Alice! What a splendid effort desuwa~! As I thought, my eyes did not deceive!」
「Thank you, Francesca.」
During the duration of the Battle tournament, the country has arranged for exclusive high class lodging for the players. So I was moved to there.
As for the player's family, if you were to mention the number of participating members, they will let them stay together with you.
Therefore, I am together with Ilya and co.
While relaxing in that wide high class lodging, Francesca came.
「You are alone?」
「If it's that too rude butler, I made him wait at the room's entrance desuwa~」
That said, when I peeked out from the window, that hypocritical butler immediately stood up.
Turning my back towards the window, I face Francesca
「First of all,Alice . Even though I said it was good enough to just enter and appear on stage for me, the conclusion is better than I had expected. I am thankful desuwa~」
「I will receive without reservations」
I received the platinum coin that Francesca passes to me.
Ooo, a platinum coin coin.
My motivation to work vanished, this heaviness.
Although I want to keep staring at it forever, with force of will, I stuffed the platinum coincoin quickly into the leather bag.
「——Alice」
「~ng?」
With a serious face, Francesca look at me.
「No.. I might not have the right to say it, but be careful.」
「Fufu」
This time round, Francesca tilted her head.
「As expected, I have a hunch that I can become friends with Francesca. 」
Being Wilmington family's representative, I understand that the risk from now on increases by leaps and bound.
Is it alright if I laugh whole-heartedly at the fools who were lured in by money?
I feel that there is an affinity somewhere.
「Alice… I will let you call me Fran 」
With her face reddening, Francesca who was facing the setting sun is cute.
「I understand, Fran——」

——When I finished talking, there was sound of the windows shattering and approximately at the same time.
I felt an impact on my back.
「——Ah」
I have trouble breathing.
Due to the impact, I was thrown forward
I was being caught into Francesca's arms who was facing in front of me.
「Alice-sama!」
「Alice!」
Ilya who is nearby holding back and Francesca who is before me saw everything. Both of them paled.
What happened?
「——An Archer is it? Sneaky cowardly assassin.」
「Oshishou-sama! Use recovery magic on Alice-sama! Please!!」
「The arrow is stopped. My my, what a troublesome disciple—— That coward, is he only quick at running away? 」
Till looked out of the window and murmured unamusedly.
With that sudden attack, I lost my bearings but when I gently patted my back, I was not stabbed by the arrow.
When I look at it closely, there is a pinpoint ice wall on my back.
That is what made the arrow stop.
After I had confirmed that I am fine, I felt a chill in my body.
Now…. If Til is not around, I will die…?
My body shivered.
「Alice……」
Francesca who caught the shivering me in her arms is distorting her face into a painful expression.
When one saw that, it shows back their true character.
This is the risk.
「——This kind of royal capital, you'll change it, right?」
「Alice, you……」
「Fran」
「——Alice, I swear to be your friend desuwa~. By my name ,Francesca Wilmington, I will remake this rotten system again!」
I am being hugged strongly by Francesca.
I can understand the situation as to why I am being personally invited by Francesca.
Even if that's the case, I want to be with this kid.
I will be useful to her.
That feeling is mutual.

Therefore, more than anything else, it is likely that there are no lies hidden within those violet eyes.

——And thus, the curtains have raised to an act where risking my life is nothing but an everyday occurrence.

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